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R. P. F. LACORDAIRE

NEW YORK. P. O'SHEA



CONFERENCES

OF THE

REV. PÈRE ✓ LACORDAIRE,

DELIVERED IN THE

CATHEDRAL OF NÔTRE DAME,  
IN PARIS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY HENRY LANGDON.

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NEW YORK:  
P. O'SHEA, 27 BARCLAY STREET.  
1870.

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TO THE  
MOST EMINENT AND MOST REVEREND  
NICHOLAS,  
CARDINAL OF THE HOLY ROMAN CHURCH,  
ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER, &c., &c., &c.

---

MY LORD CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP :

THE Conferences of the Reverend Father Lacordaire have been, for a great number of serious minds in France, the means of recalling them to the belief in, and the practice of, the Catholic dogmas ; because they have found in these brilliant discourses a revelation of the reality, the unity, the grandeur, and fecundity of the ideas and sentiments which those dogmas contain.

It has appeared to me, my Lord, that these same Conferences may produce an equal success in our own country ; for we are affected, perhaps, in a greater degree than any other nation by the religious movement which now agitates Europe, and which will, I hope, lead it back to the bosom of the Church, our Mother—the eternal source of liberty as well as of authority.

With this view, my Lord, I have undertaken the accompanying translation, which I venture to dedicate to your Eminence, in the hope that you will be pleased to accept this homage ; for, with a sacred character of a higher order, your Eminence has desired to accomplish for England much of what the illustrious Dominican has done for

France ; the works of your Eminence have been among us the signal of a visible return towards that Catholic faith of our ancestors which but yesterday was so misunderstood, so generally despised, and is now so loved and so conscientiously practised by many even of our greatest men of learning and genius.

It is then natural that I should desire to place under the protection of your Eminence the translation of a work which so much resembles those eminent productions which have called forth universal admiration, and one which is especially calculated to multiply and perpetuate their salutary effect.

Your name, my Lord, will lessen the weight of my responsibility in the difficult task which I imposed upon myself, of endeavoring to render in our own language that style, so graceful, so delicate, and yet at the same time so full of energy, in which the Reverend Father Lacordaire presents his ideas to the world ; it will also render more familiar to our country the name of this distinguished apostle, who is not only one of the greatest among those great men who have adorned the Christian pulpit, but also one of the most pious models of sacerdotal and religious life which our age has seen.

With this confidence, and with sentiments of the most profound veneration and respect for your Eminence,

I have the honor to be

Your Eminence's devoted subject and servant,

HENRY LANGDON.



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TO  
THE RIGHT HON. LORD JOHN RUSSELL,  
&c., &c.

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MY LORD :

You have been active in endeavoring to check the growth of the institution which claims to be "*the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth*;" whose mission it is to "*teach all Nations*:" it is to be hoped that you have done this in ignorance of its *real* character and object.

I have translated the Conferences of one of the great apostles of this, the Christian faith, in the single hope that they might serve to open the eyes which now see not. These discourses possess the merit of having been addressed, most of them long ago, to another nation, and consequently they are free from anything which might have allusion to recent events in England. I trust that your Lordship will find time to peruse this general defence of Catholic Christianity, and may be led to a just appreciation of its merits.

I take the liberty of dedicating the work to your Lordship, without the usual permission; your Lordship's active and prominent opposition to the claims of the Catholic Church would appear to justify my affixing your Lordship's great name to this publication.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's obedient humble servant,

H. L.





## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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ON entering a vast and majestic building, the anticipation of seeing which has filled our youth with desire, and accumulated interest during after-years in our minds; we halt at the threshold, and our hearts beat high with anxious expectation; we feel that an event in our lives is about to be accomplished, that we are about to realize hopes, dreams, long-cherished visions.

In the following pages the majestic and glorious temple of Truth is exhibited to the seeking spirit. Halt at its portals, prepare yourselves for a great event, enter with reverence, and judge not of its architecture by the prejudice of others, neither permit your own to infuse an alloy into the contemplation of the harmony and perfection which will appear before you. Judge of its proportion and its heavenly grandeur by your highest and most ennobling faculties; and may the Divine Author of all good elevate your souls to a clear comprehension of the Holy City through which he has ordained us to pass, on our way to the heavenly regions; that we may enjoy a foretaste of the immortal glories.

I have undertaken the translation of this great work in the full conviction that a just and real perusal of it will infuse consolation and peace into minds which before were troubled by doubt. I have endeavored, to the best of my ability, to render the matter into my own tongue. I beg indulgence for errors which were beyond my power to correct, and hope it may be extended to me for the

sake of the deep and refreshing draughts which the inquiring mind must drink in from what is here rendered. I am willing to bear meekly any severe criticism, because I feel sure that some will read here that which will bring to them peace in the life that now is, as well as in that which is to come. I waited a year in expectation that some one more able would undertake this task. The thanks of my readers for the good I have been able to place within their reach will, I hope, outweigh the censure which may be excited by imperfections.

H. L.

## P R E F A C E .

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ORIGINAL sin has inflicted three wounds on man, which since the beginning of the world are capable of being healed by the effect of the Redemption ; these are, concupiscence, ignorance, and error ; concupiscence, which detaches him from God by bearing him with avidity towards all the objects of the senses ; ignorance, which separates him from God by the darkness which it accumulates in his mind upon his nature and the divine action ; error, which, by a false light, attracts and keeps him far from the glorious centre of justice and truth. These three seats of evil, which are transmitted to us with life, to prove us and to be the source of our merit, are incessantly combated, in the name of Jesus Christ, by the sacraments, and the word of which the Catholic Church is the active depositary. By means of the sacraments, she purifies our hearts by invoking there an infusion of the eternal holiness which is in God ; she dissipates the shadows which surround our understanding, by introducing there a light superior to that of nature ; she supports our feeble logic against the craftiness of erroneous deduction, by communicating to it the doctrine of humility ; but to that internal action which she exercises upon our hearts, God has ordained that she should join the external action of the word, because nothing appertaining to that which regards man ought to be purely spiritual, man being at the same time, everywhere and always, matter and mind. And just as the sacraments are destined to produce a threefold effect of purity,



of light, and of rectitude, the language of the Church is prepared, in the councils of God, to sanctify, to enlighten, and to undeceive mankind. From thence arises a three-fold predication : that of morality, which combats concupiscence ; that of instruction, which combats ignorance ; that of controversy, which combats error.

When Jesus Christ said to the multitude, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit !*"<sup>1</sup> it was the preaching of morality. When he said to the Pharisee who came in the night to sound him, "*Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,*"<sup>2</sup> it was the preaching of instruction. When he replied to the Sadducees who were desirous of embarrassing him on the question of the resurrection of the dead, "*Have you not read that which David said, I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob ? Now he is not the God of the dead, but of the living,*"<sup>2</sup> it was the preaching of controversy.

These three kinds of preaching are perpetual in the Church, because she has always before her the feeble-minded, the ignorant, the deceived. But, with the difference of the passions, which remain constantly the same, or which at least undergo only apparent modifications, ignorance and error vary without bounds, are clothed by turns in the garb of barbarism, of civilization, of decadency, and assume the peculiar disposition of nations and their native character, in order to lull them to sleep or obtain the mastery over them. This is the ancient serpent of perdition, which changes its hue with the sun of each age. Thus, whilst the preaching of morality undergoes only diversities of style, the preaching of instruction and of controversy, pliant as ignorance and subtle as error, must imitate their powerful versatility, and force them, with

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 5, v. 3.

<sup>2</sup> St. John, ch. 3, v. 5.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 22, v. 31, 32.

weapons renewed without ceasing, into the arms of immutable truth.

The Conferences which we publish do not precisely belong either to dogmatic teaching or to pure controversy. A mixture of the one and the other, of the language of instruction and that of discussion, designed for a country in which religious ignorance and the cultivation of the mind progress at equal paces, and in which error is more bold than learned and profound, we have endeavored to speak in them of divine things in words which went to the hearts and conditions of our contemporaries. God prepared us for this task by permitting us to live a sufficient number of years in the oblivion of his love, borne on the same course which he destined us to resume at a later period in an opposite sense, so that, in order to speak as we have done, it was only necessary for us to exercise a little memory and hearing, and to keep ourselves in our inmost thoughts in unison with an age which we entirely loved. From thence, I presume, arise the sympathies which have been so profusely extended to us, and also the reproaches which have pursued us. Those have treated us as a brother adventuring in the regions of faith; these, as a brother lost in the remembrances of the world. We have endeavored to be gentle towards each, towards success as towards humiliation. God, who is the judge of all hearts, has sustained us.

It has been asked what is the practical object of these Conferences. It has been asked, "What is the object of that strange language, half religious, half philosophical, which affirms and contests, and appears to sport on the confines of earth and heaven?" Its object, its unique object, although it may often be subject to attack on that account, is to prepare souls for the reception of faith, because faith is the principle of hope, of charity and salvation, and because this principle, weakened in France during

sixty years by a corrupting literature, aspires to be revived, and requires but the vibration of affectionate language, of language which entreats rather than commands, which spares rather than strikes, which gently lifts the veil rather than tears it forcibly asunder, which, in fine, treats with the intelligence and cherishes its light, as one cherishes the life of a fellow-creature, sick and tenderly loved. If this object is not practicable, what is there on earth which is? For us who have known the pain and the allurements of unbelief, when we have infused the smallest particle of faith into a mind tormented by its absence, we thank and bless God; and if we had thus succeeded but once in our lives at the price of the fatigue of a hundred discourses, we should yet thank and bless God. Others, if we do not, others will come after. They will ripen the blade of corn and gather it under their sickle; the Saviour has said it: "One sows and another reaps."<sup>1</sup> The Church has not one kind of laborers only; she has them of every temperament, formed by that Spirit which *bloweth where it listeth*, which *gives without measure*, but *with distribution* which makes *some apostles, others prophets, these evangelists, those pastors and doctors*, in order to employ all holiness to the ministry which edifies the body of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Children of this Spirit one and multiple, let us respect its presence in each of us, and when in our age a soul utters the strains of eternity, from the time when it gives its witness in favor of Christ and of his Church, let us not show ourselves more severe than he who has said, "*Whoever is not against you is for you.*"<sup>3</sup> It is not a question of following the rules of rhetoric, but of leading to the knowledge and love of God: let us have the faith of St. Paul and speak Greek as badly as he did.

<sup>1</sup> Saint John, ch. 4, v. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Saint John, ch. 3, v. 8, 14 and 34. Saint Paul to the Hebrews, ch. 2, v. 4. *Idem* to the Ephesians, ch. 4, v. 11 and 12.

<sup>3</sup> Saint Mark, ch. 9, v. 39.



Called by the choice of two bishops to the first pulpit of the Church in France, I have there defended the truth to the best of my ability, with sincerity at least, and it has reached some hearts. I publish to-day the words which I there uttered. They will reach the reader cold and discolored ; but when, on autumn evenings, the leaves fall and lie upon the earth, more than one look, more than one hand still follows them ; and if perchance they might be disdained by all, the wind may bear them along and prepare with them a couch for some poor one whom Providence watches over from the height of heaven



CONFERENCES  
OF THE  
REV. PÈRE LACORDAIRE.  

---

OF THE CHURCH.





## FIRST CONFERENCE.

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OF THE NEED OF A TEACHING CHURCH, AND ITS DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER.

MY LORD,<sup>1</sup>

GENTLEMEN,

CHRISTIANITY is as old as the world; for it consists, essentially, in the idea of a God, Creator, Legislator, and Saviour, and in a life conformable to that idea. Now God manifested himself to the human race from the first under the threefold relation of Creator, Legislator, and Saviour; and from the commencement, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Jesus Christ, there have been men who lived conformably with this idea of God. Three times before Jesus Christ, God manifested himself to men in this threefold character: by Adam, the first father of the human race, by Noah, the second father of the human race, and by Moses, the lawgiver of a people whose influence and existence have mixed them up with all the destinies of humanity.

There exists, however, a fact not less remarkable, namely, that Christianity only commenced its reign in the world eighteen hundred years ago, by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ appears to have been the first who brought light into the world: before him, as said Saint John, "*il*

<sup>1</sup> Monseigneur de Quelen, Archbishop of Paris.

*shined in darkness.*"<sup>1</sup> But what is the cause of this? How is it that Christianity, vanquished in the world before Jesus Christ, has been victorious in it since his coming? How is it that Christianity, before Jesus Christ, "*did not hinder the nations from following their ways,*"<sup>2</sup> and that Jesus Christ, on the contrary, was able to utter that saying of eternal victory, "*In mundo pressuram habebitis, sed confidite, ego vici mundum?*"<sup>3</sup>

What new thing is it then that Jesus Christ has accomplished? Is it the sacrifice on Calvary? The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of men "*was slain from before the foundations of the world.*"<sup>4</sup> Saint John witnesses to this for us in the book of his visions. Is it the Gospel? The Gospel, after all, is but the word of God, and that word, after many trials, did not change the world. Is it the sacraments? The sacraments are only the channels of grace, and the grace of God, although less abundant, without doubt, before Jesus Christ, has nevertheless not ceased continually to flow to men. What new thing, then, has Jesus Christ accomplished? By what means has he secured the eternal duration of the victory obtained on Calvary? Listen to his own words, he will say them to you: "*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.*"<sup>5</sup> This is the work which was to vanquish for ever hell and the world, which was every day to renew the sacrifice of the Saviour, to maintain and diffuse his doctrines, to distribute his grace! We come, gentlemen, to speak to you of this work, of this Church, which is "*the pillar and ground of truth;*"<sup>6</sup> and from to-day we shall fathom this vast subject of meditation, by endeavoring to show you the need of a Church destined to the universal and perpetual instruction of the human race.

<sup>1</sup> Gospel, ch. 1, v. 5.      <sup>2</sup> Acts, ch. 14, v. 15.      <sup>3</sup> St. John, ch. 16, v. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Revelations, ch. 13, v. 8.      <sup>5</sup> St. Mark, ch. 16, v. 18.

<sup>6</sup> 1st Epistle to Timothy, ch. 3, v. 13.



Called to address you, not by my own will, but by that of the venerable pontiff who occupies for me the place of God, do not expect, gentlemen, that I shall speak to you in high-flown or subtle language. If you are come here to seek vain figures of speech, you have deceived yourselves. Ah ! let the eloquence of time perish. I pray to Heaven for the eloquence only of eternity. I pray only for the truth and charity of Jesus Christ ; and if the success of grace accompanies these discourses, it will prove that now, as in times past, God makes use of the weak to confound the strong. Lord ! eleven years have passed since, prostrate upon the pavement of this stately temple, I divested myself of the embellishments of the world to put on the apparel of thy priests. I came to seek the blessings which thou hast promised to those who serve thee, in anticipation of the time when I should be sent to others. Thou hast given me these blessings ; enable me now to communicate them to my brethren ! Come to the help of thy servant ! Set a watch on my lips, to the end that they may be faithful to my heart, as my heart is faithful to thy law.

I will commence by stating an incontrovertible fact : Man is a being subject to instruction.

Why have I undertaken to address you in this place ? If I look around me I perceive signs of all ages, hair which has become white in the watchings of learning, features which bear traces of the fatigue of combats, others which are animated by the sweet emotions of literary studies, of young men also who have but just plucked the third flower of life. Tell me, you who are assembled here, what do you ask of me ? What do you desire from me ? The truth ! You have it not then within you ? You seek it then, you wish to receive it, you are come here to be taught ?

Whilst you were infants you had a mother : it was upon her bosom that you received your first education. She

enlightened you first in the order of sensations, by continually directing you in your relations with external objects. Moreover, by the long and laborious transmission of language, she laid open within you the source of your understanding: next she instilled into the depths of your soul a more precious treasure, that of conscience; she rewarded and punished you according to your actions, imparted to you the measure of justice and of injustice, and made of you a moral being. She next initiated you into the mysteries of faith, taught you to believe in things invisible, of which visible things are but the reflection; she made you a religious being. Thus, from the dawn of your life you were instructed in the four orders which constitute your being; in the orders of sensations, of ideas, of conscience, and of faith.

When a man has passed the age of early instruction, he ranges himself from that time in one of the two classes which divide humanity; the enlightened and the unenlightened. Men who are not enlightened form what is called the people; and this class, absorbed in its poverty and incessant labor, remains always incapable of resuming its early education by personal studies or by reflection. These can never deeply analyze their sensations, their ideas, their conscience or their faith. They can only emancipate themselves from the teaching which has been accorded to them by accepting new instruction, of which they perhaps believe themselves to be judges, but of which, in fact, they will never be but the servants. Thus, when Jesus Christ, the liberator of the understanding, came into the world, he said of the mission which his Father had confided to him: "*The Lord hath sent me to evangelize the poor.*"<sup>1</sup> Why the poor? Without doubt, because they form the greater number; and all souls being equal before God, when he weighs them in the balance of

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, ch. 4, v. 18.

eternal justice the souls of the people must turn the scale ; and again, and for this greater reason, because the people, in their incapability of learning and obtaining knowledge, stand in need of a master who puts them in possession of truth by a course of teaching without cost or peril.

If the case stand thus with regard to the people, that is to say, with regard to nearly the whole of human kind, may there not be at least an exception for those whom we have called enlightened men ? May they not be empowered to break with the teaching which has made them what they are, and reconstruct for themselves, by their own unaided power, an understanding which springs from themselves ? It is true this is their pretension. You all remember, gentlemen, when the time arrived for you to leave your families and enter into society, it appeared to you that there had sprung up within you a new power, which you called Reason. You set yourselves to work to adore this power ; and, prostrating yourselves before it, you said, " Here is my only master, my only sovereign ! My reason shall henceforth teach me if there exist sensations, ideas, a conscience, things unseen that sustain this world which is visible to us." You said this, but it was in vain. You could not rid yourselves of the primitive man ; your reason was a gift of your education, you were the children of instruction, the sons of prejudice, the children of men ; you are so still. In fact, the enlightened class divides itself into two others, one composed of men whose time is unoccupied, whom we may call men of leisure, the other of those who are compelled to labor by the necessity of their position. This latter class is incomparably the more considerable. The distribution of property makes each stand in need of his labor for preserving the social position which his forefathers transmitted to him, and, in such dependence, men are unable to occupy themselves actively about the great questions which agitate human-

ity, or to pursue philosophical studies, which alone are sufficient to absorb the whole of an existence. This class is very nearly in the same state of helplessness as the people; they are, with the addition of pride, among the poor in understanding whom Jesus Christ came to evangelize. For beware, gentlemen, of accepting the terms of the Gospel in too material and restrained a sense. The most abject poverty is poverty in regard to truth, as the greatest riches is the riches of the soul in truth. And when man has discovered his real welfare, when he is rich in truth, he will not exchange his condition for all the fortunes of kings.

But the division being thus made, what remains there proudly floating on the surface of humanity, and capable of employing man's reason for reconstructing itself? Some privileged men, who have received from Heaven genius—a rare thing—fortune, less rare, but which, however, is uncommon, and finally some dispositions naturally inclined to arduous study—genius, fortune, application, three necessary conditions for arriving at mental superiority. These are they who might be able to reject the ideas which instruction gave them, like the eagle, who, taking her eaglet in her claws, and seeing it cannot look steadfastly at the sun, casts it upon the earth as a worthless burden. But the work is not so easily performed; captivity also presses upon them. Instruction is not confined to individuals, it extends also to nations and periods. After having mastered his nurses and his teachers, the man of genius has another task to accomplish, that of overcoming his nation and his age.

Is he able to do this? Has it ever been accomplished? Look around you. What man is there, however great he may be, who does not bear the mark of his race and of his age? I ask each of you, whoever you may be, would you have been what you are if you had been born six hundred



years ago? Six hundred years ago this same cathedral, into which you come to hear the word of God as judges, and full of your own self-sufficiency—this same cathedral would have beheld you bringing stones into its foundations. If, even, without changing the age, you had been born in any part of the world which I might name, would you have been what you are? Why is France Catholic, Prussia Protestant, Asia Mahometan? Whence arises this enormous difference between nations so near to each other? A diversified word has prevailed amongst them, diversified teaching has produced different minds, creeds, and morals. Yes, nations and periods undergo the yoke of authority, and impose it in their turn; they inherit the prejudices and passions which preceded them, modify these by prejudices and passions to which they have given birth, and this changeableness of time, which appears to attack the independence of mankind, is but the effect of submission to tyrannies which engender each other. The tyrants change, but the tyranny changes not. And, strange to say, men are proud of the age in which they live, that is to say, of undergoing with consciousness the prejudices of the time in which they live.

For us, Christians set free by the Church, we belong neither to the present age nor to the past, nor to that which is to come; we are of eternity. We are not willing to submit to the teaching of a particular age, or nation, or man; for this teaching is false, because it is variable and contradictory. Indeed, with the exception of a certain number of phenomena proved by experience, certain axioms which form the foundation of human reason, and the distinction of justice and injustice, what is there upon which human instruction is agreed? What is there which that teaching does not corrupt? I survey with horror the places where man teaches man; where shall I find a voice which does not contradict another, and convince it

of error? I call London, Paris, Berlin, Constantinople, Pekin, celebrated cities, which govern the world and instruct it; is there one of these which has not its opinions, its systems, its customs, its laws, its doctors of a day?

Let us not leave this capital, it is, they say, the chief seat of human civilization; well, then, count the doctrines which, during eighty years, have been received here, and which, from here, have spread themselves over Europe. Idolatry had its gods without number, and an unique Pantheon elevated to their glory; but who will enumerate human opinions, and erect a Pantheon vast enough to give to each an altar and a monument? And yet man is an instructed being; he is necessarily influenced by the ideas which surround his cradle. If man were not an instructed being he would communicate directly with truth, and his errors would be purely voluntary and individual. But he is taught, and infancy is not able to defend itself against erroneous teaching; the people cannot defend themselves from erroneous teaching; and the greater number of enlightened men are unable to defend themselves from error which they imbibed in their infancy, and against the influence of some superior minds which rule the others. This is the state of humanity, a state of oppression which betokens an irremediable degradation, or the necessity of a divine teaching which protects infancy, the people, the vulgar among enlightened men, and even those who, by their stronger understandings, are delivered over to the private domination of their own pride, and who do not free themselves from the public domination of their age and nation.

Ah! truth is but a name; man is but a miserable playing of opinions which succeed each other without end, or else there should exist on earth a divine authority for the instruction of man, that being necessarily subject to teaching, and necessarily misled by the teaching of men.

The heathens themselves felt the want of this : Plato said "*that it was necessary for a master to descend from heaven to instruct humanity ;*" thus speaking in advance, as Saint Paul spoke in his letter to the Ephesians, "*God has given to us Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Doctors, in order that we may not be as children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by the malice and cunning of men who sow error around us.*"<sup>1</sup>

But by what sign shall we recognize this tutelary authority ? How shall we distinguish the genuine authority among so many false ones ? By one sign, only to speak of one ; by a sign as resplendent as the sun, which no false authority possesses, which no false authority can counterfeit—the sign of universality, of Catholicity.

If there is anything remarkable in this world it is assuredly this : that no human authority has been able to become Catholic, that is to say, to pass the bounds of a certain class of men, or of nationality. Human authorities are of three kinds : philosophical authorities, religions not Christian, and Christian sects. As to philosophical authorities, they have never reached the people, nor have they ever united enlightened men in one single school ; but, divided infinitesimally, they have presented to the world in all times a spectacle at sight of which pity has outbalanced esteem. Where exists there in the world at the present time a reigning authority ? The religions not Christian have never been more than national ; and that which approaches nearest to Christianity, which may to a certain degree be considered as a Christian sect, Mahometanism, has only aspired towards universality by hoping to subject the universe to the Caliphat by force of arms. As soon as the Mahometan empire was divided there were as many sects as kingdoms : witness Turkey and Persia, the worshippers of Ali and those of Omar. Where exists there

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 4, v. 11 to 14

now in the world a religion not Christian which possesses universal teaching? The same phenomenon reproduces itself for the Christian sects, and we have a notable example of it in the two great existing schisms, the Greek and the Protestant. The Greeks were subject to the Patriarch of Constantinople, whilst Constantinople continued to be the unique centre of the East. When the Russian empire was formed the Russian Greeks constituted a Church for themselves, and burst the last ties which, in the infancy of their empire, still attached them to the primitive seat of their schism. As to the Protestant Churches, they have divided themselves into as many fractions as kingdoms: Episcopal Church of England, Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Calvinistic Church of Holland, present Evangelical Church of Prussia; and the Protestants who have not been brought together in a kingdom into a national unity, such as those of the United States, have formed thousands of sects which have no longer names because they have so many.

The true Church, that which from the commencement of its existence has taken the title of Catholic, which no other during eighteen centuries has even once dared to dispute—the true Church, divinely instituted to instruct the human race, has alone established an universal authority, in spite of the enormous difficulty of the thing. The whole Roman empire leagued itself together against this immense authority which sprung up on all sides, and, notwithstanding the persecution with which she was assailed from the earliest times, the Catholic Church passed the bounds of the Roman empire, and penetrated into Persia, Ethiopia, the Indies, and Scythia. After she had subjugated the Roman empire and passed beyond its limits, the barbarians came to annihilate the temporal unity founded by heathen Rome, and, whilst all the nations changed and divided themselves, the Catholic Church spread its unity



and universality wherever force broke up the ancient communities: she also sought the barbarians even in their forests, to lead them to the foot of the same altar and the same episcopal throne. New worlds disclosed themselves; the Church was there as soon as the conquerors. The Indians of the West and of the East knew Jesus Christ, and the sun nevermore set but in the kingdom of truth. Protestantism, in endeavoring to break up Catholic unity and universality, has but produced, by the spectacle of its divisions, new proof of the impossibility of founding an universal Church by the simple power of man.

In fact, to accomplish this, it is necessary to overcome the jealousy of temporal authority, the diversity of language, of customs, of prejudices, the enmities between nations, and, lastly and above all, the independence of minds—that independence which is not only a submission to false authorities, but to authorities which flatter the pride, and appear to support themselves on the reason of each individual. Error will never overcome these divers obstacles, because error, being at the same time pride of the understanding and logical contradiction, is incapable of uniting either minds or wills. The unity alone of the Church, that unique unity in the world, is an undeniable proof of her divinity: the Church is Catholic, therefore she is true.

But it is quite needful to observe that the Catholicity of the Church is not limited to embracing the divers nations of the globe: it comprehends also in the same spiritual ties, infancy, the people, enlightened men, the strong and the weak. All, without distinction, have the same creed and the same faith; instead of which philosophy extends itself only to educated men, and the heathen religions only reached the people. Protestantism itself has not been able to avoid this radical vice, for it is one thing

for the people and another for enlightened men. It commands the people by authority, it leaves the instructed free. The people believe their ministers, the educated man believes the Bible and himself. In this particular also the Catholic Church is all divine; she not only extends protection to the weak—she makes them also equal to the strong.

You will perhaps say: But if a teaching Church is necessary to the human race, why was it established so late? Why eighteen hundred, and not six thousand years ago? Gentlemen, it was needful that everything should bear the stamp of the fall of Adam—nature, the body, the soul, society, truth itself—to the end that man might profoundly feel the want of reparation. Yet God did not abandon men in the times anterior to the constitution of the Church; he communicated truth to them by Adam, by Enoch, by Noah, by Abraham, by Moses, by a continual succession of prophets and revelations. The Church herself, or the community of men with God, existed from the beginning; but she did not exist with the organization and the force which she received from Jesus Christ. Therefore Jesus Christ did not say that he was come to establish the Church, but that he was come to establish it *upon the stone*—upon a stone destined to *break those who should fall upon it, and those upon whom it should fall.*<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ has completed the design of the Church as he has completed all things: but before the consummation man was not abandoned—he was prepared and sustained. His condition was not so good as our present condition, but it was sufficient and just, had he been willing to profit by it. He perished by his fault, not by the fault of God.

The Church has invested truth with a social character; and if, returning over the space which we have surveyed, we ask ourselves why man is an instructed being, we shall

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 21, v. 44.

answer that man is a social being, like all other creatures who in their way live by association ; but because man possesses an understanding in addition to the qualities with which they are endowed, his understanding ought also to be kept alive by association, and that truth being the food of the mind, it should be transmitted to him socially, that is to say, by teaching. If man had not sinned, God alone would have been his preceptor, his master ; man, having separated himself from God by sin, has remained opposite to the man who was primitively instructed by God, but who was capable of forgetting that which God had said to him and of corrupting himself. From thence arise superstitions—adulterated vestiges of truth ; from thence philosophy, the effort of man to arrive at truth ; from thence the need of a teaching Church, to transmit and perpetuate truth, when God was willing to pardon and restore mankind ; but of suspension of the definitive organization of that Church, to the end that man might feel himself fallen, powerless, and miserable.

At present, gentlemen, this Catholic Church, which has accomplished the work which was impossible for men to achieve ; this Church combats those who have weakened her, and would willingly destroy her. Stripped of the external ornaments which she held from men, bound by them as an inconvenient and dangerous power, insulted in her apparent weakness, she resembles a giant whom children have bound round with little bands, endeavoring to make him fall. She defends herself by her mass ; *mole sua stat*, and her immobility, of itself, is a victory. Tranquil, because she bears within her bosom an immortal promise and the spirit of God, she is anxious only about humanity, which is able, more or less, to associate its own destinies with the grandeur of hers. Do not deceive yourselves on this matter, gentlemen. There has been but one question in the world during six thousand years, that of

knowing whether Christian truth would be vanquished in it or become victorious: it was vanquished up to the coming of Jesus Christ; it has been victorious since Jesus Christ, and victorious by the Catholic Church, based upon the stone which Jesus Christ laid. It is, then, for the overthrow of the Catholic Church that fallen nature conspires; but the Church is no other thing than humanity renovated, vivified by faith, guided by charity, enlightened by the spirit of God. The combat is, then, in the very core of human nature, between the humanism of the senses and the humanism of the mind. The humanism of the senses manifested itself in antiquity during four thousand years; the humanism of the mind has manifested itself in modern times during eighteen centuries: which of these do you prefer? This is the question. To hope that the nobler part of humanity will triumph without the Church, after having destroyed the Church, is to hope for an effect without its cause—is to destroy the foundations of an edifice in order to sustain and enlarge it. It is often said that the past is at war with the future, and this is true. The old world is at war with the new: and what is the new world, if it is not that which has produced the Church? What is the old world, save that which was without a Church? As the Christian is the *new man*, according to the language of the Holy Scriptures, so the Catholic Church is the *new humanity*. Whoever attacks it invokes the past; whoever defends it appeals to the future. I know that many wait for a new revelation more perfect than that of Christ, a new Church more perfect than that founded by Christ, a new humanity more perfect than that formed by the Church. But where is the new Christ, where is the new Church, where is the new humanity, and what do we see around us save the old passions, the ancient selfishness, so much the more hideous because it rears its head in the midst of a society which charity has founded? Ah!



gentlemen, when the Church appeared upon earth she did not thus announce herself. She edified without ruining anything; you ruin without edifying anything. But I trespass on your time. Be, then, men of hope and desire; and you who are more advanced, who appreciate at their just value the powerless efforts of this age, and who know that the tomb of the Church will be the tomb of the civilized world, entertain more ardent faith and charity, devote yourselves entirely to that Church out of which there is no salvation in time or in eternity.

## SECOND CONFERENCE.

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OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

OF all kinds of bondage, the most oppressive, the most fatal in its effects, is that of the understanding. Now the understanding is in bondage whenever it is in submission to individual authorities, and the lot of mankind is such that reason forms itself by instruction, and that all men, without exception, have been ever since the beginning subject to authority. The people, that is to say, the immense majority of mankind, remain invincibly bent under the yoke of their early instruction ; and the men who are called enlightened yield at least to the instruction recognized by their country and their age. What is man to do to release himself from this servitude ? What resource has he by which to emancipate his understanding ? There are two of these : either he must think by his own unaided means, or, if it be proved that to exercise thought he stands in need of instruction, if he cannot exercise thought of himself, because God alone thinks in this manner, there is only salvation for him here below by having an authority which represents the infinite intelligence of God, and which communicates to each man its divine conceptions by divinely-established teaching. This authority exists, and we have seen that a sign is given by which we may recognize

it: the sign of universality. We must now probe more profoundly the nature of this authority, this liberator of the human understanding: we must see what is its constitution, the constitution which it has received from God for perpetual existence.

Now, every kind of authority is composed, primarily, of a hierarchy, that is to say, of a body of men co-ordinated to act for the same end; secondarily, of a power of which that hierarchy is the depositary, and which it exercises at will. The subject of this discourse will, then, be the development of the Catholic Church in her hierarchy, and in the power which is confided to it.

Truth being the chief good—we may say the only good—of men, and as no man ought to be deprived of this good, without which there is no other, it follows that it was of the highest importance that God should render his Church universal, in order to enable her, like the light of the sun, to enlighten every man coming into the world. Therefore our Saviour commenced by founding an apostolate, that is to say by choosing a certain number of men who were to be sent into the whole world. The heathens had shut up sacerdotal knowledge in their temples; a few strangers only who came from afar to interrogate them were admitted into the sanctuary. The philosophers confined their teaching to the interior of the schools; they distributed it in gardens and under porticos, surrounded by the distinctions of friends and their applause. It was not thus that Jesus Christ gave himself to his work: he did not say to the depositaries of his uncreated Word—to his apostles—“You will wait until some one comes to ask you for the truth.” He did not say to them, “Go, and promenade in gardens, and under the porticos;” but he said to them, “*Go, and teach all nations.*”<sup>1</sup> Fear not the difficulties of languages, neither the differences of

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 28, v. 19.

customs, nor the temporal powers; halt not to examine the courses of rivers or the direction of mountains—go straight before you: go, as travels the thunderbolt of him who sends you, like the creating word which brought life into chaos, like the eagles and the angels.

And who were the first apostles whom he chose? You might have seen, gentlemen, experiments of apostleship in times near to us, men who, after a century of destruction, found it fit and excellent to build up again. Where did they choose their apostles? In the higher ranks of society: they invited to themselves the learned, the ingenious, the high functionaries of state. Jesus Christ did not thus act: the work was the deliverance of the human race from error; he chose his apostles not from among the oppressors of the understanding, but from among the oppressed—not from the ranks of philosophers and learned men, but from the poor and simple-minded. One day, as he walked on the borders of a lake in Galilee, he saw two fishermen, and he said to them, “*Follow me: I will make you fishers of men.*”<sup>1</sup> And such were the first liberators of the human understanding.

The apostolate being founded as the parent stock of the episcopate, the universe was readily comprehended in its many parts: all these men separated to diffuse the Gospel under the four winds of heaven. The Church, however, had not yet all the elements necessary to universality, for who could keep in one single association, in one single doctrine, all the dispersed apostles? Who could hinder particular Churches from becoming in time diversified and opposed to each other? Who was to put them in communication with each other? There is no universality without unity. A centre was necessary to the apostolate, an unique chief of the apostles, and the bishops their successors. This idea was even more bold

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 4, v. 10.



and more original than that of the apostolate. What! an unique chief for the whole world! What! place upon the head of a single man an authority against which all the princes of the earth might one day league themselves! Constitute unity upon one head, which a sword-cut might make to fall! This was bold, original, impossible, yet, however, it is so. Not far from the place where the rulers of the ancient world sat by the force of arms, an old man sits whose voice commands and is respected not only within the limits of the largest human empire which has ever existed, but within and beyond the limits of all the seas. He has traversed not one century only, but eighteen hundred years. He has witnessed the rising up against him of schisms, heresies, kings and republics, and he rests secure upon the monument which creates his power, having only for his guard that short saying, "*Thou art Peter, and upon that rock I will build my Church.*"

The Church, however, was not yet complete. If all her ministers had been bishops under a single supreme pontiff, the bonds of unity would have been easily broken, on account of the too great dignity and independence with which each minister would have been invested. Jesus Christ, therefore, instituted the presbytery, which should, under the authority of bishops, spread the Gospel, offer the Sacrifice, and administer some of the sacraments; and afterwards the deacons, to aid the priests in their ministration.

The vicar of Jesus Christ was to exercise jurisdiction to bind and loose in every part of the world; he alone could appoint bishops and assign to them a district and a flock. The bishops were to have jurisdiction to bind and loose within their respective provinces, and to assign to the priests under them a district and a flock. The priests were to communicate directly and habitually with the faithful laity, to offer up for them the holy Sacrifice, to

administer the Sacraments, save those of Confirmation and Orders, and to publish the Word of God. The decisions in matters of faith, the regulations with regard to general discipline (the government of the Church), were to appertain only to the sovereign pontiff and the bishops. The Church thus constituted possessed the unity of a monarchy, the expansive action of a democracy, and between these the constitution of a powerful aristocracy, thus uniting in its centre all the elements of power: the unity which co-ordains, the action which spreads, and the moderation which keeps unity from being absolute, and action from being independent—a perfect economy which no government has ever possessed, because in all human governments the three elements of power have always sought to destroy each other from the passions of men. God alone, by His Son, has accomplished this *chef-d'œuvre*.

Such, gentlemen, is the hierarchy which was founded to secure forever the destinies of truth. But in exposing to you its principles of action I have only performed a part of my task. In effect, what is a hierarchy? It is composed of men. And what are men without power? What is the human race itself if it is disarmed? It is needful, then, for the Church to possess a power in addition to the hierarchy. Now, there are only two kinds of power: strength or force which kills the body, and persuasion which kills the soul, in order to put another into its place. Which of these, the power which kills the body, or that which kills the soul by changing it, was given to the Church of God?

One day, in an Eastern town, some men were at prayer in a chamber, where they waited for something which had been promised to them. On a sudden a voice came from heaven, like a rushing wind, which filled the whole house where they were. Tongues of fire appeared upon their heads; and filled with the spirit of God, they began to

speak all the languages which were spoken under heaven, and one named Peter stood up and spoke thus to the multitude: "*Men of the Jews, listen; these men are not drunken, as you suppose, but this is the accomplishment of the saying of the prophet: The spirit of God shall be poured out upon all flesh, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.*"<sup>1</sup> The power which God gave to his Church was then the power of his Spirit. But this power is invisible; and God, who creates everything in harmony, owed to his Church, existing in time, and ordained for it, a power suitable for time, that is to say, persuasion or force; since in this world man can only be attained by this double action. Which of these, then, has he given to her? Is it persuasion or force?

It is not force. When Jesus Christ was attacked in the Garden of Olives a disciple drew the sword, and the Saviour said to him, "*Put back thy sword into its sheath, for he who smites with the sword shall perish by the sword.*"<sup>2</sup> And when he dispersed his apostles to preach he said to them, "*I send you forth as sheep among wolves; be ye prudent as serpents and harmless as doves.*"<sup>3</sup> You see, gentlemen, we are not armed like warriors, but like lambs and doves: prudence only is recommended to us, because no one is entitled to act without it among men. The only vengeance which is permitted to us by the Gospel is to shake off the dust of our feet: "*Eccutite pulverem de pedibus vestris.*"<sup>4</sup> The dust—that which of all things is most feeble, most inoffensive; that which here below is nearest to annihilation! This is all which is permitted to us: to shake a little dust upon the world.

The power of persuasion is, then, the power which was given to us. But how?

<sup>1</sup> Acts, ch. 2, v. 14 and following.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 26, v. 52.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 10, v. 16.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 10, v. 14.

Persuasion reposes first upon reason. The Church should, then, possess the highest reason which exists under heaven. She should be the highest metaphysical authority, the highest historical authority, the highest moral authority; and the highest social authority.

The highest metaphysical authority: in this sense, that upon all the mysteries of which the destinies of humanity are composed—mysteries which she does not create, but which she explains—she possesses the most rational, the most elevated solutions, before which those proposed by religious and philosophical doctrines in divers times cannot keep their ground. To demonstrate this will occupy much time; this demonstration is the very object of our Conferences, and will result from their development.

The highest historical authority: the future is an obscure spot, in which all defects may be hidden for a day; but the past belongs only to those who really possess it, and no one, however great his genius may be, whatever power he may wield, is able to create rights of naturalization for himself in the past, if he has not been borne along in its inaccessible depths. Now, nothing like the Church existed there. The Church is the past of humanity—she is history itself. When you wish to establish anything outside her pale, you are compelled to commence with yourselves, with your own dust, and say, "Behold the truth, which commences in me!" This pretension humanity will never recognize. This character of novelty is that of the Christian sects, and it is the decree which condemns them. Yesterday, to-day, in a thousand years, if they exist so long, men will be able to say to him who founded them, "On such a day, at such an hour, you were at Wittemberg; you appeared in the public square in the costume of a monk; you held in your hand a bull of your pontiff, and you threw it into a pile! . . . . But humanity preceded you by twenty centuries; it was too



late!" Thus, when men say to us, to us of antiquity, "You would do well to make yourselves a little newer," it is just as if they had told a king of France to go to St. Denis and gather together the bones of his ancestors and throw them into the Seine, to the end that the sepulchre be whiter when he descends into it. It is easy to understand that this historical authority is our strength and our glory, and it is on this account that it is disputed with so much animosity—men waste all their energies in building up against us fabulous chronologies. It is easy to make figures, but man cannot make days; and when he has tired himself with inventing lying origins, he suddenly, on a stone or strip of paper grown old, meets with that which is sufficient to drive his inventions to the winds. We, on the contrary, have our traditions, our book, and for witness to that tradition, for guardian to that book, an eternal race. There are some Jews in this assembly—everywhere is seen that man whom popular phraseology has called the *Wandering Jew*. The priest cannot speak anywhere without raising up an eternal man, a Jew who stands up to say, "Yes, it is true; I was there."

The highest moral authority: for the Church is chaste, she engenders chastity, and there is no morality without chastity. It is chastity which makes families, royal races, genius, enduring and powerful nations. Wherever that virtue exists not there is only corruption in a tomb. Ah! if there are any here who are not my brethren by faith—I desire but to appeal to their consciences—I shall ask them, Are you chaste? How should you believe if you are not chaste? Chastity is the elder sister of Truth; be chaste for a year and I answer for you before God. It is because we possess this virtue that we are strong, and those who attack ecclesiastical celibacy, that halo of the Christian priesthood, know well what they are doing. Heretical sects have abolished it among themselves; it is the

thermometer of heresy : at each degree of error corresponds a degree if not of contempt for, at least of diminution of, this celestial virtue.

Finally, the highest social authority : society is impossible if it be not founded upon respect for authority by the people, and for the people by the authority. Well, then, the Catholic Church carries the respect of the people for authority to its highest degree ; she changes the master into a father, so that if the father errs, the children, like those of the patriarch, cover his faults with the mantle of their respect. At the same time she instils into the hearts of sovereigns that respect so delicate, so precious in the eyes of their people. In their palaces, and in the midst of their pomp, she causes them to practice that saying of the Gospel, "*He who would be greatest among you let him be your servant.*"<sup>1</sup>

The persuasive force which resulted from these rational advantages was immense. Whether men examined opinions, history, morality, or society, the Church was without parallel. They were able to deprive her of everything, her patrimony, the help of the civil authority, the liberty common to all ; they could cast her ministers into prisons, torture them on scaffolds ; but men do not imprison reason, they do not burn accomplished facts, they do not dishonor virtue, they do not assassinate logic. We are strong, then, gentlemen, first by the spirit of God which speaks in us, but also in the human mind which, when it comes coolly to examine our history, our dogmas, our morality, is obliged to agree that nothing is more firmly established.

Nevertheless, this was not yet enough. History only addresses itself to those who have studied it ; ideas enlighten only those who can compare them ; civilization is only appreciable to civilized men. The Church needed a yet more human, that is to say, a more general source of

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 20, v. 26.

persuasion. God gave to his Church charity. There was no heart into which the Church could not penetrate by charity; for misfortune is the monarch of this lower world, and sooner or later every heart is touched by his sceptre. Men may resist grace and reason, but who shall resist charity? Why hate those who do good? Why kill those who give their life? Henceforth the Church might advance with confidence to subdue the universe, for there are tears everywhere in the world, and they are so natural to us that even if there were no cause for them they would flow without cause, the simple charm of that indefinable sadness of which our soul is the deep and mysterious well. Metaphysics and history are the pillars of truth: but these pillars are hidden in the foundations of the temple, they are only sought for by the light of flambeaux and by distinguished men. A humble priest, a cure of a country village, never enters with the sciences into the cottage of the poor. He goes there with charity. He finds there a heart suffering, and consequently open: and the poor man, seeing the priest coming to him full of respect for his misery, and of feeling for his trouble, easily recognizes truth in the garb of love.

But whilst I speak of charity a doubt presents itself to me. Ah! are we as charitable as we ought to be? Are there among you who are young souls ardent and affectionate towards God and towards the poor? Do you not see that troubles increase around you, that the measure is filling, and the world leans over frightful abysses? O Lord, give us saints, so long a period has elapsed since we saw them! And we had so many formerly! Cause some to rise again from their ashes! *Exoriare aliquis ex ossibus!*

The Church, gentlemen, thus armed with reason and love, with the highest reason and the strongest love, what can men do against her? They can only leave her free, protect her, or persecute her.

If they leave her free she will develop all her means, will gain first one soul, then another. She will extend herself so that the princes of the earth, astonished, will regard each other and say, "What is this power which fills all our cities, our country, our public squares, and will soon leave us alone in our palaces?" And they choose between these two alternatives, to protect the Church or to persecute her.

If the Church is protected as in the time of Constantine, it is one power joined to another; the imperial mantle spread over the Church cannot cause her shame, and may do her good.

If, on the contrary, they persecute her, then is her bright hour!—It is that which God permits in the times of martyrs; it is that also which he permits when the Church has fallen asleep. Do you know what Saint Ignatius, the founder of the last great religious order, said on his death-bed to his troubled disciples, who asked him, "Father, do you wish for nothing for us?" "My children," said he to them, "I desire for you persecutions." Persecution! From it we have sprung, it is our cradle. I myself—I have sprung from blood to address you. Where should I have been if the eighteenth century had continued its peace to us? But persecution is come, and now, if we are sought, we are alive—behold us!

Free, protected, persecuted, the Church loses nothing under any one of these rules: each imparts life, power, and glory to her. At this moment the Church is everywhere stripped of her patrimony, slowly acquired by her virtues: the civil authority has withdrawn itself from her; a new power, that of the press, has conspired for her ruin. Well, in the midst of universal change, the Church still persuades, and her astonished enemies, not being able to comprehend her existence, amuse themselves by prophesying her death. Like the dust which insults the passing trav-

eller, this age, in ruin, outrages the eternity of the Church, and does not perceive that her immobility itself is proof of her strength. Elevated in the world by a persuasion of eighteen centuries, upon an antiquity of four thousand years, the Catholic Church is invincible, because that which she has been able to accomplish everywhere she is able to do always. That which is universal is perpetual, as that which is infinite is eternal. For nothing can become universal in humanity but that which has a necessary connexion with the nature of man ; and as the nature of man does not change, that which has a necessary connexion with it is also unchanging. If a persuasion as long in duration and as widely spread as that which the Catholic Church founded could perish in the human mind, it would be the same with human reason. What would a reality be if such a reality were only an illusion ? For what say the last adversaries, the present adversaries of the Church ? They maintain that man's reason is a continual progress in which each new idea destroys the old, where there is nothing stable and absolute, where everything is destined to perish save that marvellous faculty which gives a moment's life to that which must necessarily perish. They thus confess the nothingness of their hopes and of their reason, which is but a passage through sepulchres in which it leaves a little ashes. But, as said Bossuet, "*this miserable lot is not assured to them ;*" the Church is living even in the heart of their predictions ; the human race, which has hoped so much, will never accept so much despair ! Persuasion will never be extinguished in the human race, and the Church is no other thing than persuasion at its highest degree—than the kingdom of persuasion.

Ah, gentlemen ! if there is anything beautiful and sacred on the earth, it is the divine constitution which I have been analyzing before you. What do men accom-



plish which approaches it? They, by force, raise up empires, which yield to force. Cyrus destroyed the work of Ninus; Alexander that of Cyrus; the Romans that of Alexander. Force, sooner or later, meets with force; an isolated persuasion meets with another persuasion; but when persuasion has vanquished the universe, not in the sense of its passions, but in that of sacrifice, then there appears a divine and an immortal work. And if they who have done this are fishermen, if a few Galileans have founded this great empire of persuasion, in spite of all the efforts of physical power, then that work is divine and immortal beyond all created expression. And I, a minister of this work, a son of persuasion, a Galilean, I say to you, children of the age, how long will ye labor for that which passeth away, and fight against that which remaineth firm? How long will you prefer force to persuasion, matter to spirit? You say unceasingly, "We must not let the Church alone or she will become too powerful;" that is to say, "We must extinguish persuasion, which subjugates us in spite of ourselves." What more could you say to attest the divinity of the Church? Learn, in fine, what she is by the unjust sentiments of her enemies; learn by the marvels of her constitution and history that their establishment and perpetuity are not works possible for man to accomplish; learn that all the good which is done in the world springs from her, directly or indirectly, and aspire to become her sons, to be her apostles, to range yourselves among the benefactors of the human race. The time is come for it. Everything is prostrate, it is necessary to reconstruct; and the Catholic Church alone is able to lay down the foundations of an immutable edifice, because she alone possesses all reason and all love, and because man is too great not to be edified and saved by the highest reason and the strongest love.

## THIRD CONFERENCE.

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OF THE MORAL AND INFALLIBLE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

WE commenced these Conferences by establishing the necessity of a teaching Church, after which we examined the constitution of that Church established by God to teach mankind. Returning to-day to our starting point, namely, to the end for which the Church was established, we will remark that no one has the right to teach if he is not certain of that which he teaches, and no one has the right to ask for belief in that which he teaches if he is not infallible. There exists this difference between certainty and infallibility, that certainty consists in not being deceived in a given case, whilst infallibility consists in the impossibility of being deceived. Certainty is the actual connection of a mind with a truth; infallibility is the perpetual connection of the mind with truth. Certainty forms part of the means and privileges with which rational men are endowed, for without certainty the mind would be but a vast doubt; but infallibility does not appertain to a man, nor to the whole of mankind, because ignorance and the passions incessantly intervene between their understanding and truth, from whence it follows that men are unable to distinguish truth, or to keep in continual and general communication with it. All that men can do when they teach

is to be certain, therefore they are unable to exact belief in their teaching, that is to say, an unqualified adhesion of heart and mind to their doctrine; for their doctrine not being infallible, it remains always to be seen if they are not deceived, or if it is not their object to deceive us. On the other hand, when an authority is infallible, it is sufficient to know what it says, to be in the right, and in the path of duty in believing it. Now the Catholic Church, instituted by God to teach mankind, is at once certain and infallible: certain of the reality of her institution by God, infallible in the preservation of the faith of which the propagation and interpretation were confided to her. She is at once certain and infallible, because if she were only infallible her authority would be based upon an imperfect circle—that is to say, she would invoke in favor of her infallibility her infallibility itself; instead of which, supported by the rational and moral certainty of her divine institution, she advances from light to light, from natural light to supernatural light, from certainty to infallibility, to come back again, by reflection upon herself, from infallibility to certainty.

We have already seen, gentlemen, or rather have faintly perceived, that the Church possesses the highest rational certainty, since she trusts for support to ideas, to history, to morals, and to society, to an extent unexercised by any other teaching body; and this assures to her here below the empire of persuasion. It only remains, then, for us to treat of her moral certainty and infallibility.

The certainty or moral authority of a teaching body results from three conditions, which furnish for that body and for those whom it teaches the proof that it is in affinity with truth, and that it dispenses that truth with exactitude and reverence. These three conditions are, knowledge, virtue, and number.

Knowledge is the first condition of certainty or moral

authority ; for how is it possible to be certain of that which we do not understand, and how can we understand that which we do not know ? When men know, on the contrary, the more they know the more they possess for themselves and for others a guarantee from error. Knowledge is the eye which perceives, scrutinizes, compares and reflects, which watches for and seizes the light, which adds to past ages the weight of new ones : it is the patient sentinel of time, and draws one by one from the universe its eternal secrets. If laborious and persevering knowledge merited no credit, we should be obliged to despair of truth ; and never, gentlemen, in addressing you shall we regard despair as a thing worthy of our attention. Knowledge is incontestibly a title, yet it is not of itself sufficient to found the moral authority of a teaching. Now the Church possesses knowledge, she was born in knowledge, she has saved knowledge, she has wrestled against false knowledge, she is in every point of view a learned body.

The Church understands what she teaches ; she does not act from blind faith, but from faith founded, as we have seen in our second Conference, upon the most elevated general ideas ; upon historical records of the highest antiquity and of the most certain authenticity ; upon the experience of the happy and civilizing influence which she exercises in the world ; and finally, upon a tradition, and an accumulation of accomplished facts of all kinds, which she unceasingly explores and increases by her labors. If knowledge, application, experience exists anywhere, it is assuredly in an association where the display of all the powers of the mind play so conspicuous a part, and which has possessed, from the commencement of time, and above all, since Jesus Christ, an innumerable multitude of enlightened men, who have filled the earth with their sayings and their writings.

And how was it possible for the Church to be other

than learned? She was born in knowledge, in one of the brightest epochs in history, in the Augustan age, preceded by others which had brought literature, the arts, and philosophy even to perfection, that it might not be said that Christianity was engendered in darkness. Knowledge received us in the cradle, watched over us, studied us, contended with us, gave us defenders from amongst the philosophers whom we came to dethrone, very many of whom bore to the Crucified the triple testimony of their genius, their knowledge and their errors. Afterwards, when knowledge was in danger of being extinguished in Europe by the invasion of the barbarians, who saved it from shipwreck? Who prepared new nations, worthy of possessing truth? Was it your fathers? Ah! your fathers!—they drew the sword, the sword yesterday, the sword to-morrow, the sword continually! See what was your share in them, men now so proud of your knowledge, and we do not blame you for it. You were there, in the persons of your ancestors, forming an armed barrier against which new invasions came to their destruction—an immense European square to protect from without that which developed itself within; whilst we, peaceful and laborious, in the persons also of our ancestors—we reconstructed knowledge from its own ruins, in order that you might one day receive that heritage from us, and that truth, finding again an age worthy of it, might not command slaves, but might shine in an empire founded upon the legitimate convictions of intelligent minds. It came—that age which we prepared—it came, and Knowledge, like an ungrateful and unnatural daughter, scarcely fallen from our hands into yours, raised herself up against us and denounced us, who had labored fifteen centuries for her, who received her again when, saving herself, bloody from the sword of Mahomet II., she threw herself all dismayed into the robes of our popes! What did we then? Did we betray knowledge, or did we



submit to bear its yoke? Neither the one nor the other: we resisted, we opposed ourselves like a wall of brass, not to knowledge, but to its errors; and now, children of knowledge, saviors of knowledge, protectors of knowledge, we arrive at an epoch not less glorious for the Church, that in which knowledge, recognizing the vanity of its efforts against us, will come into our temples to seek us, and to offer to us the kiss of reconciliation and of justice, which she owes to us, and which she will give us.

Thus the Church is a learned body. I add that this character does not belong to any other religious authority to the same degree. Out of the Church we find, first, the teaching of religions not Christian: do they bear the stamp of knowledge? Knowledge in the sacerdotal castes of India, of Egypt and of Greece, did not manifest itself at all beyond their limits, it was a secret which had no scientific character. The Mahometan religion is another example. The Koran is but a plagiarism of the Bible. Mahomet attacked only a few points of Christianity, the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and the divinity of Jesus Christ; he acknowledged the unity of God, the creation of the world, and even the whole historical series of inspired men, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses; but he wounded Christianity, and from that very moment what has been the punishment for this outrage? His religion was condemned to be no more than a religion not Christian. He presumed to reject the corner-stone, the corner-stone fell back upon him. Ignorance weighs upon his nation, that nation whose emissaries come now to beg a few crumbs of our knowledge, a magnificent homage which God makes them render to the superiority of Christian nations. But in vain do they clothe themselves in European garments, their Sultan has in vain given European feasts. . . . . For the curse of ignorance is upon that land, they

have denied Jesus Christ. Knowledge will never appear there except with Jesus Christ.

Shall we consider the Christian heresies? The greater part of them yet possess knowledge: these sects exist in countries honored by devotion to literature and the arts, for they have not denied Jesus Christ. But admire another prodigy. This knowledge which preserves unity for us, and lives with it as a sister, what does it produce among these sects? It consumes their religion, it effects what it has always done with heresies. Heresies, in detaching themselves from the Church, have carried away knowledge under their cloak; but knowledge has been like a sword which wears out its scabbard; the sheath was not strong enough, and heresies have never existed longer than three or four centuries. Knowledge is for them like a stormy sea, which strikes, retires, and returns, until it has carried away whole continents in a vast and universal wreck. Protestantism has now reached that fatal era: it commences its fourth century, and with its fourth century commences its ruin, which attentive minds already discover, and which hardly hides itself from less profound and foreseeing minds.

Knowledge, therefore, the first condition of certainty or moral authority, appertains to the Church: the religions not Christian do not possess it; the separated sects are corroded away by it.

But although knowledge is one of the distinctive marks of moral certainty, it is not sufficient for arriving at that degree of assurance which is the undeniable proof of truth. Knowledge is a power of the mind; now there exists in man a still higher power, which is that of volition. There resides free-will, the mainspring of our actions, which commands the mind itself, even to causing it to perceive that which is not, and to feed upon the most miserable illusions. Knowledge is, then, a vain remedy against

error ; subjugated by the will, it becomes subservient to the passions, and misuses light, even against truth. In a word, man can corrupt knowledge, according to the expression of Bacon, and for this reason he requires a guarantee that it does not violate its duties and its functions ; he stands in need of an incorruptible mediator between the understanding and the will, and that mediator you have named, my brethren : it is virtue. For the will only urges knowledge to the point of illusion for the gratification of the senses and of pride ; and as often as virtue corrects knowledge, and knowledge kindles virtue in the same soul, light is infused into it like that of heaven, as near to perfection as it is permitted to man to desire it.

Now, the Church, gentlemen, not only possesses virtue as a mediator between the understanding and the will, like a foreign aroma which purifies knowledge, but her doctrine itself is a virtue. The truths of which its web is composed are not pure speculations, but truths which draw after them a crowd of moral consequences, terrible to our nature. The cross, detachment of self, penitence, such is the end of Christianity, the result of its persevering action. To be crucified with Jesus Christ in order to live with Jesus Christ, this is what the Church preaches unceasingly in all her instructions, by all her creeds and ceremonies :—this is to say, that she is in constant contradiction with the world and fallen nature. To admit without practicing the truths which she announces, is already a virtue ; what would it be to admit them for the purpose of putting them into practice ? We are not, then, mere academicians, who, in the silence of the cabinet, elaborate discoveries useful to the enjoyments of humanity, and who afterwards pompously bring them forth in the midst of public assemblies, where applause, honors, pensions, and rewards recompense our toil. We, gentlemen, when we bear truth to men, it comes from a broken

heart ; it comes from the foot of the cross : this truth says that the heart of man is an abyss, and that it must be purified by austere penitence ; it comes from blood and requires blood. If you were tempted to doubt its purity it would say to you, "How can I be otherwise than pure, since I was born crucified?"

Let us now glance at the religions not Christian, and the Christian sects : do they possess this second character of moral certainty ? You know what heathen religions are, religions of pleasure as much as of ignorance. You know Mahomet, at the same time that he rendered knowledge impossible he destroyed morality, and bequeathed to his disciples shameful practices, and eternal hopes as shameful as his morals. If we pass to Christian sects, they possess some good, on account of their having preserved some relation with Jesus Christ ; however, their virtue is not like that of the Church, a virtue of sacrifice. Catholic virtue destroys pride in its germ ; whilst Protestantism, in exalting private judgment so highly, keeps pride alive. Let us take an example to illustrate this more clearly. There exists in Europe an empire which comprises at least seventy millions of souls. They are Christians, and differ only from us by breaking off from our unity, for there is but very trifling difference between us as to dogma. This empire contains two elements, the one civilized, the other barbarian ; this is very conducive to its strength. The nation is naturally pious ; however, with its seventy millions of souls, with its resources of civilization and barbarism, and with its Christianity, the Russian empire has not yet been able to produce a sister of charity ; neither the Russian empire nor all the Protestant powers together ! And why ? Because to love in a high degree, deep-seated faith is required ; it is not enough to possess reasoning powers for discussion, it is necessary also to adore, to become absorbed, to humble

one's self even to the dust. Protestants, with their moderate virtue of well-meaning, good people, will never attain to this necessary enthusiasm in love. Our saints are reproached with having been mad; ah! yes, they did loose their senses! Is it possible to love without madness? To love is to immolate one's self—to prize the life of the loved one immeasurably above our own; is to prefer anything, agony, death even, rather than wound the heart of the object of our love. Is not this madness? Do you remember the soldiers who, not long ago, went without shoes and without bread to fight on the frontiers, and died contented, crying, with their last breath, "*Vive la Republique?*" That was also a species of madness, but of that sublime madness which creates and saves nations, and which, magnified on Calvary in the person of a God, re-created and saved the world, and, transmitted into the Catholic Church, will there perpetuate the splendor of authority with the heroism of virtue, even to the last day.

The third mark of moral certainty is number, not number taken materially, but number added to knowledge and virtue; for it is manifest that the more learned and virtuous men there are grouped around a doctrine, the less that doctrine is left exposed to the attacks of human weakness and suspicion. Now the Church possesses number also. She is not composed of a small band of men, of men apart from the throng, who cannot be heard by them, and who form a privileged college among mankind. If we only regard the teaching body of the Church, she comprises a multitude of men of all countries and conditions, to which must be added a vast number of men taught by the Church who possess knowledge and virtue to as high a degree as the teaching members of the Church, and who bear testimony to Catholic truth by their enlightenment and by their actions. We must also add those



who, although less enlightened, contribute their testimony to the same truth by their adhesion to it, thus showing that she reaches all dispositions, every degree of understanding, and all hearts.

What human teaching will ever be able to compare itself to the teaching of the Church, and to flatter itself that it possesses knowledge, virtue, and number to the same degree? The religions not Christian possess neither knowledge nor virtue; and if they glorify themselves of their numbers it is of number without any value, since they only drag after themselves a greater mass of ignorance and vices. The Christian sects have knowledge, but knowledge which devours them, and sooner or later will cause them to sink into rationalism, unless, like the Greeks, they preserve themselves from dissolution by making of their heresy the tomb of all cultivation of the mind; they have also some virtue, but virtue of very moderate degree, which is unequal to attaining to the great self-devotion necessary to charity and the work of the apostleship. As to number, they have not a vestige of it, at least among the Protestants; since each, in virtue of his private judgment, offers to it only his personal ideas, and, in spite of his nominal connection with this or that body, and the appearance of an assembly, he remains always a single and an isolated Protestant. The Church, on the contrary, is a learned body, but one in which knowledge does not adulterate faith: a virtuous body, but of superhuman virtue, which carries the renunciation of self even to heroism in poverty, self-imposed chastity, and voluntary martyrdom: an immense body, but one whose colossal and multiplied proportions are bound together in the strictest unity, in that unity which is number *par excellence*, and which the ancient philosophers with good reason made the principle of things. What higher authority, and consequently what higher moral certainty, is there? Shall we oppose to it in

another order the authority and the certainty of mathematics? Mathematical science has, without doubt, in its favor a perfect intellectual evidence; but, unconnected with the will, and cultivated by a few learned men, it has infinitely less affinity with the wants of mankind than the teaching of the Church, and only possesses one kind of evidence, which is, notwithstanding, sufficient to establish it with that degree of certainty which is necessary for its action on the human mind, and for the accomplishments of its ultimate design. If no person denies it, it is because no one has any interest in doing so, because it touches only the brain, and has no responding chord in the heart. Whereas the Church is the head, the heart, the whole man, the centre and the circumference; she is like a curtain spread from pole to pole in the universe, against which all interests and passions clash; like an inflexible dial which marks the true time of things at every point in space, and every moment in duration. Is it astonishing that she has enemies? and the very negation which is made of her, does it not strengthen her with proof of the adhesion which is given to her in bearing witness to her impartiality, and to the necessity of her existence?

And the longer the Church exists, the more these characters of moral certainty which she bears along with her increase in lustre and force. For her knowledge continually increases in this sense: that new generations always bring to her the weight of their enlightenment, and that knowledge, applied to new facts, new customs, and new nations, is unceasingly confirmed by new experience. Her virtue increases also, in this sense: that the number of men who practice it becomes greater with time, and thus the evidence which results continually increases. The nearer, then, the Church approaches to the end, the more it will become unreasonable to contend against her teaching; on the contrary, the nearer she was to her origin, the more

she stood in need of striking and eternal evidence of her mission. For this reason, although there have always been miracles in the Church, they were notwithstanding more numerous in the beginning than now.

Nevertheless it is not enough that the Church be certain of her mission and of her divine institution; it is not enough that she may possess for herself and others an incomparable moral authority; it is necessary also that she should be infallible—that is to say, she should be unable to deceive herself in the teaching of the doctrine of which she has the charge. For if she were able to deceive herself, the minds which she would instruct would have to decide whether in every given case she had not deceived herself. Now, she was established precisely because this perception of truth cannot be exercised by mankind composed of infants, the people, and enlightened men without sufficient leisure. If the Church were not infallible, she would have no right to exact faith; she could only address herself to each individual, saying to him, “Thus I understand this or that point of dogma, morality, or general discipline; let us see if your ideas thereupon agree with mine.” She would consequently cease to be a teaching authority, to become that which all Protestant ministers are, simple readers of the Bible, which the people retain the right to understand as they please. And yet Protestant ministers are in perpetual contradiction to the principle upon which they are based; for whilst they declare that it is the right of each to interpret doctrine, they notwithstanding cannot hinder themselves from giving to their flocks their particular interpretations, and, acting thus with authority, they maintain in divers countries, up to a certain point, the differences which distinguish each of their sects, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans. This result has been produced by the strength of the teaching authority, and by the oppression of the people taught, since that authority which teaches

them is false, contradictory; not only to other Protestant authorities, but even to itself. In a word, gentlemen, mankind stands in need of teaching, as we have proved in our first Conference; man is necessarily taught whether he will or no, and he is not a judge of the teaching which he receives because he is incapable of being so; whence it follows that he should be taught by an authority which cannot deceive him, and which possesses also the right of exacting his faith. Every other mode of teaching is tyrannical, since it submits man to a fallible authority which is capable of enslaving him to error.

But this infallibility, necessary to the Church established by God to conduct mankind, is not an appanage of our minds. It supposes, in fact, that the understanding will never be darkened by ignorance and the passions, those two fertile sources of error. Now man is incessantly exposed to ignorance by the weakness of his understanding, which is finite, and to the influence of the passions by the feebleness of his heart, which is corrupt. All that he can do is to emancipate himself from them in a given case, that is, to be certain. Mankind, taken collectively, is affected by the same helplessness, and so affected in a yet higher degree, because it is more subject to ignorance and to the influence of the passions than certain men selected in certain degrees of knowledge and virtue. Without doubt, if the human race had not fallen in Adam from the privileges of his creation, men would have received light and purity sufficient to guide them by their perpetual communication with God; but that state no longer exists. The Church alone receives the Spirit of God; she has succeeded to the primitive rights of mankind, and by her alone we are enabled to re-establish our original relations with God; it is to her that it was said, "*I am with you even to the consummation of the world.*"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 28, v. 20.

Do not, then, gentlemen, distinguish in the infallibility of the Church a strange and incomprehensible privilege. It is, on the contrary, that which is most simple and most needful to men, the re-establishment of their relations with truth. If there is anything extraordinary in the world, it is not that truth should have been given by God to mankind in a teaching free from error, but it is that that teaching should be disowned, notwithstanding we are in so much need of it; and the disorder introduced into the world by original sin can alone explain that anomaly. Mark well, gentlemen, that the Church does not create truth. Truth is in God; it is in the word which God has spoken to man; and the whole privilege of the Church is the privilege of teaching that word without being able to transform it into error. How is mankind to be taught, how can we ask men to exercise faith, without possession of this privilege? Thus, my friends, every religion which does not proclaim its infallibility convicts itself of error by that fact; for it avows that it may be deceived, which avowal is the height of disgrace and absurdity for an authority teaching in the name of God. It avows that it is only a system of philosophy, and consequently it must suffer the fate of a system of philosophy. You have had recent proof of this; you have seen men present themselves before mankind as founders of a religion: many among them were men of talent, enthusiasm, and good faith. What then? They have all run aground before the necessity of a divine mission, a promise of infallibility. All of them together, and their chief at their head, have not dared to present themselves before you and say to you, "Listen and believe, for we are infallible!" And this is why reasoning has split them in pieces. For that which destroys everything now, that which causes the world to be floating on its anchors, is reasoning; man no longer believes in man, and will not yet submit himself to God.



Without a divine authority there is nothing stable, nothing strong, but all is like the wind, which passes by and destroys. If society shakes from one end of Europe to the other, what do you think it is which agitates it in its foundations? It is not the sword which overthrows princes; the sword strikes against the sword, force clashes against force; when the powers of the earth have only to combat against force, they destroy with their armies those who lift themselves up against them. But the terrible enemy, that which destroys everything, and against which neither republic nor king can do anything, is reasoning,—reasoning which has lost the counterpoise of authority and infallibility.

And yet, in spite of this need of infallibility, the Catholic Church is the only one which has dared to call itself infallible. The heathen religions, so far from pretending to it, did not even venture to teach a doctrine to their followers; the Mahometan religion contents itself with having the Koran read to its disciples; Protestants reject infallibility altogether, and only teach by perpetually contradicting their principle. To teach nothing, or to cause a book to be read which is reputed divine, this is all the resource of religions which do not call themselves infallible. And if you ask why they do not call themselves infallible, it is because they cannot; for they naturally feel that their perpetual variations, or the absurdity of their tenets, would constantly betray that pretension. It is not so easy as men think to claim infallibility. All false religion comes from man; and what man is bold enough to proclaim the infallibility of his ideas and those of his successors? How, for instance, could Luther proclaim himself infallible—he who attacked the infallibility of every Church? Every man who desires to found a new religion—that is to say, to corrupt an ancient religion, for none save God has founded a religion upon the earth—

every man who entertains this design finds himself constrained to proclaim his infallibility, and at the same time incapable of doing so. If he does not proclaim himself infallible, himself and his successors, he will fail to obtain the belief of his followers, and perish by reasoning, which would introduce into his doctrine variations without end. If he proclaims himself infallible he becomes the laughing-stock of the universe. See why false inventors of dogmas hide themselves within their temples, plunging their doctrine in mystery and burying it under symbolic forms ; or invoke reasoning, like the heretics, and build ephemeral Churches and fugitive dogmas upon quicksands. The Catholic Church, in proclaiming herself infallible, has, then, accomplished that which is without doubt absolutely necessary, but which is beyond the powers of man. And that infallibility is really manifested in her by an indestructible constancy in her dogmas and morality, notwithstanding the difference of time, of place, and of men.

Why do you not laugh when I tell you that I am infallible—not I, but the Church of which I am a member, which has given me my mission ? Again I ask you, Why do you not laugh ? It is because the history of the Church gives her some right, even in your eyes, to proclaim herself infallible ; it is because, during an accomplished course of eighteen centuries, amidst all the commotions of the human mind, she has remained firm as a pyramid. You would like well to insult her on this very account ; you say truly it is but a tomb, it contains nothing but a little ashes. Yes ; but this tomb is the tomb of Christ, its ashes are long-enduring, and, in spite of yourselves, it influences your thoughts.

It is, you will say, the very principle of infallibility which has produced this result. But it is idle to claim infallibility if it be not really possessed ; nothing can prevent the variations and contradictions produced by the

diversity of minds. How was it that Gregory XVI. and the bishops of his time had the same ideas as their predecessors, living, as they did, under such new influences? That the people hold the same belief as the chief teachers of a doctrine, because they regard them as infallible, is so far very well. But the chiefs themselves, if they are not guided by a superior, immutable, and infinite Spirit, how can they preserve the unity of the doctrine? Let us recognize, gentlemen, in this accordance of fact with principles the divine character, which alone can explain them. There should be in the world a teaching authority; that teaching authority should possess the highest characters of certainty or moral authority; and, in addition, it should be infallible, in order to be empowered to exact the faith of those whom it teaches, and who are unable to become judges of doctrine. Now the Catholic Church alone teaches all mankind, or, at least, she alone bears the marks of catholicity; she alone possesses all the characters of moral certainty in their highest degree; she alone has ventured to call herself infallible; and the history of her doctrine proves, in fact, by its admirable and incomprehensible unity, that she has received this precious gift by which the primitive union of men with truth becomes re-established. Elsewhere, on every hand, we find only local, variable, and contradictory ideas, waves succeeding waves; whilst the Catholic Church resembles the ocean, which surrounds and bathes all the continents.

## FOURTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE ESTABLISHMENT UPON EARTH OF THE CHIEF OF THE  
CHURCH.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

THE Catholic Church being built upon unity, as we have seen in the Conference which treated of her constitution, it follows that the foundation of that unity on the shifting sands of the world must have been the object of a profound work of God ; and if it is grand to follow the designs of his providence with regard to the least among men, what will it be to pursue that design in the establishment of that imperishable rock which, by a sublime play of words, he called Peter,<sup>1</sup> declaring that whoever should fall upon that stone should be broken ? We purpose to-day to examine with you the foundation of the papacy, in the persuasion that the divinity of the Church is there fully shown, and that you will recognize it without any effort.

The papacy, or the sovereign pontificate, bears along with itself two elements : spiritual supremacy and temporal independence. Without spiritual supremacy unity was but a chimera ; without temporal independence, supremacy was but the enslaving of truth, confiding it to a single man, and that man delivered over to the mercy of

<sup>1</sup> Peter signifying a rock. St. John, ch. 7, v. 42.

an emperor, or a republic, or some other human power. It was needful, then, on one hand, that supremacy should be always visible and incontestable; and it was also necessary that it should have free exercise, notwithstanding obstacles of every kind which it might have to encounter. The manifestations of pontifical supremacy, and the establishment of its independence, these are two capital points correlative to each other, without which it was impossible for the unity of the Church to exist in the world; and for which, consequently, God must have provided in a manner so much the more worthy of attention as the work was more necessary, and more difficult also, seeing the nature of human communities, and of the passions in the midst of which so great a power was to be placed. We are about to traverse a vast course, gentlemen; we shall be obliged to leave much detail in the shade; but you will see a sufficient number of things illustrated to distinguish there the finger of God, and to conceive the desire to study more profoundly the great depths of sovereign wisdom.

The spiritual supremacy of the sovereign pontiff was founded by Jesus Christ, with three remarkable declarations on three memorable occasions. Walking one day in Galilee with his disciples, he halted and said to them, "*Whom do men say that I am? And the disciples answered: Some say that thou art John the Baptist, and others Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He then said to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answering, said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say unto thee: Thou art Peter, and upon this rock shall I build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the*



*keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth it shall be bound also in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."*<sup>1</sup> And at the last supper, suddenly turning towards Peter, he said to him, "*Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren."*<sup>2</sup> Lastly, after his resurrection, Jesus one day said to Peter : "*Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these ? Peter answered : Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said to him : Feed my lambs. He said to him again : Simon, son of John, lovest thou me ? He answered : Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said to him : Feed my lambs. He said to him the third time : Simon, son of John, lovest thou me ? Peter was grieved, because Jesus said to him the third time, Lovest thou me ? And he answered : Lord thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee. And Jesus said to him : Feed my sheep."*<sup>3</sup>

These, gentlemen, are the three sacred declarations upon which the supremacy of Peter was founded.

In virtue of these eminent words, immediately upon the ascension of the Saviour, Peter exercised his apostolic prerogative. He it was who stood up in the *cenacle* to cause the election of an apostle in the place of Judas ; he it was who, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, first announced the word of God to the Jews ; he also first invited the nations to the faith in the person of the centurion Cornelius ; it was he who performed the first miracle, when he cast Ananias and Saphira dead at his feet because they lied to the Holy Ghost ; it was he who spoke first in

<sup>1</sup> St. Mathew, ch. 16, v. 13, and following.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke, ch. 22, v. 31, 32.

<sup>3</sup> St. John, ch. 21, v. 15, and following.

the council of Jerusalem, and proposed that which it was needful to maintain with reference to the observance of the ancient law. Everywhere his supremacy is manifested.

But a seat was essential to that supremacy: it was necessary to establish somewhere the chair of St. Peter, and to find a place in which it could remain in the enjoyment of full independence. Where was this place to be? Between the Tyrrhenian sea and the dark summits of the Apennines, a handful of brigands had constructed their cabins around some hills. In digging the foundations for their first ramparts they found a bloody head, and the oracle affirmed that that city should be the head of the world. Indeed, if that handful of brigands had possessed maps, and if they had taken a pair of compasses, and had opened them at a radius of three or four hundred leagues, they would have seen that they formed the centre of a crowd of nations of Europe, Asia and Africa—of all those the extremities of whose territories were washed by the waves of the Mediterranean. But, instead of compasses, they extended round themselves their iron hand, and founded an empire which was to have for its boundaries the ocean, the Rhine, the Euphrates, and the Atlas. And at the end of seven hundred years, after having destroyed the nationality of all their neighbors, glutted with blood, with spoils, with glory and pride, these brigands, become the first nation in the universe, resigned their proud republic into the hands of a single master . . . . . and that master lived when Saint Peter deliberated as to where in the world he should establish his apostolic chair. Would you believe it, gentlemen? it was under the eyes of this master, whose look even made the earth tremble, it was in his city, on the very steps of his throne, that Saint Peter went to establish his chair and seek his independence! But what independence could he obtain in such

a place, he who aspired to a domain much more vast than that of the Roman Emperors? What independence? He did not trouble himself about it, gentlemen; he carried it with him: he carried the independence of one who feared not to die for truth, the independence of martyrdom.

Only two of the pontiffs, his successors, died in their beds during three centuries, and that only because age overtook them before death by violence. So that the first crown of the papacy was the crown of martyrdom; its first independence, the independence which death brings to him who disdains it. It was meet that the power of the Church should commence by that long affliction. Without doubt, truth ought to enjoy the right to penetrate into empires without paying at their frontiers the tribute of blood; but God designed to show how profitable it is for a man to suffer when he aspires to bear truth to men. He determined then the course of events, so that during three centuries the Church, and her first apostle at the head, gave their blood, in order to prove that they did not deceive the world in announcing themselves as the bearers of truths from above. Now, the first boy who leaves the schools believes himself entitled to teach truth to the whole of mankind; and if a single hair falls from his head of eighteen years old, he considers every thing lost, and knows not how to cry loud enough against tyranny. For us death has been inflicted upon us; a long while we suffered it, and we complained but with moderation, counting those to be happy who thus died to render glory to God, and to confirm, by their witness, the faith of their brethren.

But how did the spiritual supremacy develop itself? By what means was it enabled to manifest itself during the time when the whole Church was enslaved to the law of martyrdom? It appears that here was an omission of Providence—a neglect of the first rules of policy. But

God does not judge like men. It was precisely because the sovereign pontiffs possessed no human means of establishing their supremacy that it was required to be more authentic and more immortal. If they had been protected by the Cæsars, it would have been said to us that the Church of Rome became the chief because she was established in the first city of the empire under the imperial purple; but as St. Peter came staff in hand to Rome to be crucified—he and his successors during three centuries—the civil influence was unable to claim any share in the establishment of the pontificate. The poor old man, shut up in those tombs which border the Roman roads, was to reign over the whole world. It was needful that, from these habitations rather of death than of life, his government should be obeyed; that men should pay him that homage; that his should be the principal see; that he should be the prince of pastors, the bishop of bishops; and this the greatest among the fathers emulated each other in proclaiming. But there was also a want of striking acts by which men could never be deceived, in order to furnish future generations with indisputable proofs. At the end of the second century the Churches of Asia persisted in celebrating the feast of Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon, like the Jews, whilst the Christians of the West solemnized it on the Sunday which follows that day. The Pope, St. Victor I., excommunicated them. In the third century St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, with a council of sixty bishops of Africa, decided that the children of heretics should be re-baptised; St. Stephen I. opposed himself to it, and menaced them with excommunication; and St. Cyprian, great man as he was, was obliged to bend. St. Dennis, Patriarch of Alexandria, the first of the patriarchs of the East, issued certain doubtful propositions on the Trinity; many bishops, alarmed, addressed the Sovereign Pontiff, and St. Dennis

was obliged to write an apologetic letter to the Pope. It is sufficient to have cited these three great facts. That period of the Church's history lasted up to the fourth century; here the Holy See entered into a new phase of its spiritual and temporal existence.

The world was Christian; we had vanquished it by the strength of martyrdom and by the grace of God. A prince ascended the throne of the Cæsars who understood Christianity, not only as a religion of the majority, but as a religion come from God for the salvation of men. He acknowledged it. He did more. By one of those resolutions inexplicable in the eyes of the world, he removed his throne to the extremities of Europe, on the borders of the Black Sea, in order to leave to the pontifical majesty all that old Rome, with its natural power and its unspeakable celebrity; and, that done, never more will a prince establish himself in Rome. When Theodosius divided the empires of the East and West between his sons, the Emperor of the West reigned at Milan, never in Rome. The Herules and the Ostrogoths desired in vain to establish a new kingdom of Italy; their capital was only Ravenna. The Lombards approached Rome in vain; Rome was not to be their sojourn, but Pavia. Kings and emperors will never more pass through Rome but as travellers.

Nevertheless a real civil sovereignty has not yet resulted to the popedom. By the absence of the emperors the Popes only possessed in Rome a moral sovereignty, which they exercised honorably by becoming the protectors of the West against the barbarians. Rome, nine times taken by assault, was nine times raised up from its ruins by them; and we see them also, by the influence of their prayers and their appearance, arresting at its gates Attila, the *scourge of God*.

At the same time the spiritual supremacy manifested



itself in a manner not less remarkable. A formidable heresy appeared. The bishops assembled in the East—in that East which was the birthplace of Christianity, where Jesus Christ consummated it by his sacrifice—in that East which had become the centre of human affairs by the translation of the imperial throne to Constantinople. Who presided over the first general council, where the universal Church was represented by martyrs bearing the scars of their combats? Who? The successor of St. Peter; not in his own person, but by his legates—by a bishop of Spain and two simple priests. Was it enough? No. The council sent its acts to the Holy See for confirmation the first and most august Christian assembly, thus humbling itself before the supremacy of Rome. It was thus at Ephesus, at Chalcedonia, at Constantinople. Heresies unceasingly raised themselves up in the East, and the East flew to the Pontiff of Rome to have them exterminated. Constantinople became the imperial city; but, far from pretending to take the first place, made vain efforts to obtain the second. Twice—in the first council of Constantinople, and in that of Chalcedonia—it tried to obtain that second place. The popedom was inflexible. It maintained the rights of the Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, and the whole Catholic world with it assigned but the fifth place to the See of Constantinople. These facts, more clear than the sun, were conducted by Providence, to the end that every eye might see the incontestable supremacy of the apostolic see.

The state of things which we have described lasted from the time of Constantine to Leo the Isaurian, during four hundred years. At that epoch the West, saved for a moment from the barbarians by Justinian and his generals, had fallen back again into their hands. The emperors were unconcerned about it, or only troubled themselves in a ridiculous manner, for the purpose of propa-

gating their favorite heresies there. One of them sent an army there to carry away the images of the Churches—madmen who, instead of sending their swords against barbarians, directed them against images suspended against walls! The West was weary of being dependent on Constantinople, the city of heresy, treason, and cowardice.

The Romans cried to the Pope: they prayed that the Roman republic might emerge from its ruins. And in fact, after Gregory II. had many times warned the emperors by the most pressing letters, the senate and the Roman people declared themselves independent, and constituted a kind of seigniory, in which the Pope had necessarily a greater influence than ever. The hour approached when his demi-sovereignty, always patient and faithful to its duties, was about to change its nature, and, by mounting higher, to receive a final consecration.

The blow came from France. That country, by an exception to general laws which rarely permit genius to be hereditary, had possessed Charlemagne from a father and a grandfather, forming with himself a triple generation of eminent men. Charlemagne achieved the design of Providence, and definitively constituted Christianity by giving to the sovereign pontificate a place from henceforth uncontested by the great powers of the world. The Pope was no longer a subject independent by martyrdom, nor an equivocal lord by moral ascendancy, nor a tutor of the people by necessity: he was what he ought to be, sovereign of a territory large enough for liberty, too small for domination. Shortly afterwards the East, the source of all heresies, separated from the West with regard to spiritual matters, as it had already done in temporal affairs, and, without designing it, confirmed the supremacy of the apostolic see by ceasing to form part of the Church, simply because it ceased to be attached to the centre of unity. The imperial power, instead of trans-

porting the seat of Christian vitality to Constantinople, ended by creating only a schism, which dishonored the Greek Church, lost the empire, and a little later delivered the one and the other over to the hands of the Mahometans; whilst the Latin Church, leaning upon the papacy, converted the barbarians, and transported the centre of divine and human affairs to the West.

This was not, however, the last interposition of Providence with regard to the chair of Saint Peter. Escaped from the Roman empire and the Bas-empire, she was about to encounter new perils, and with them to emerge even over the miraculous elevation which she held already from God. From the political establishment of Charlemagne, which was feebly sustained by his successors, the feudal system formed itself; man became attached to the land by the inheritance of his benefices, and a servitor by virtue of his oath. Ecclesiastical benefices followed the law of military benefices, the bishops and abbots took their rank by investiture and oath in the bonds of vassalage. Rome even was reached; and the German emperors, carried away by the course of general ideas as much as by their ambition, wished in future to see in the apostolic patrimony only a species of great fief, detached from the empire by the liberality of Charlemagne, but kept in dependence by the feudal laws. They pretended to the right of confirming the election of the sovereign pontiff, as well as that of conferring investiture of bishoprics and abbeys by ring and crozier, the symbols of spiritual authority. Thus even the greatness with which Providence had adorned the papacy for assuring its independence became the tomb of its liberty, and each social phase appeared destined to give a bloody denial to the design of God for founding truth upon unity. A horrible confusion ensued in the Church from its connection with the feudal institution. Simony tainted almost every place with corruption; and

a pope wrote : "Wretched man that I am ! if I cast my eyes around me I see the East a prey to the Evil One, and in the West, the North, and the South, scarcely a bishop who governs for the love of God and the salvation of his brethren."

At this time there was a monk at the Abbey of Cluny called Hildebrand. That monk saw a bishop of Toul pass by, who was going to take possession of the apostolic chair by the simple will of the emperor. He could not help saying to the bishop that it was not permitted to accept the pontifical dignity from the hands of the temporal power, and that if he wished to restore the glory of the Holy See, he, Hildebrand, proposed to conduct him to Rome and cause him to be regularly elected by the people and the clergy. "What !" cried he, in his indignation, "the lowest woman of the people may freely espouse her betrothed, and the spouse of Jesus Christ cannot freely choose hers !" Hildebrand, after long services, ascended at last the pontifical throne, resolved to defend its liberty even to death. But what arms did he employ to set it free ? Martyrdom ? It supplied only a negative force, a resisting and not an attacking force. Alliance with some great prince ? None of them dreamed of serving God sufficiently. It was for Gregory VII., by attentively considering the ideas and customs of its age, to discover there the remedy for the abuses which devoured Christianity, and that remedy he saw. The whole of the feudal system rested upon the oath, not such as we now understand it, but upon an oath which bound the heart, the soul, the life, the possessions, the whole being. Gregory VII. comprehended that by giving themselves up in this manner it was impossible for the oath not to become reciprocal ; and he saw that if it bound the less to the greater, it should also bind the greater to the less. Moreover, the oath was a religious act, the strength of which lay in the name of God called in witness of the promised faith, and which in con-

sequence could not serve as a bond to injustice and oppression. The feudal oath was then politically and religiously susceptible of being annulled: politically, because an act of treachery could be committed by the lord to his vassal, and by the vassal to his lord; religiously, because the name of God can never serve as a title to commit evil, certain, manifest and persevering evil. That theory possessed the merit of being drawn up in the very heart of European public law, but it had not yet been instrumental to the emancipation of the Church; the eye of a great man was wanting to discover it, and the heart of a saint to apply it. Gregory VII. was the one and the other. He died in exile, *having loved justice and hated iniquity*, apparently vanquished, but rewarded in the future by the liberty of the Church which was the object of his life and the cause of his death.

The Crusades very soon bore witness to the triumph of the papacy, and placed its influence and its glory above all other, by the magnificent use which it made of them to the profit of the European republic.

But it is dangerous to be exalted, even with justice and by good deeds. A hidden reaction against the Holy See was agitating men's minds; it burst out by the events and doctrines which have filled the history of the last five centuries. I will merely indicate them. In the fourteenth century the sojourn of the popes at Avignon during sixty years; in the fifteenth the great western schism, which undermined the respect of the nations for the centre of unity; in the sixteenth Protestantism; in the seventeenth Jansenism, that treacherous heresy, which never dared openly to attack the Church, but hid itself in its bosom like a serpent; in the eighteenth rationalism, which believes itself strong enough to attack not only the vicar of Jesus Christ, but the work and person of Jesus Christ himself. At one moment all appeared to be lost; from



one end of Europe to the other there was but a vast conspiracy against Christianity, in which the princes and their ministers occupied the foremost places. We know the thunderclap which undeceived them. These kings, who gave their little entertainments to philosophers, were told one day that the head of the King of France, the first king in the world, had fallen before his palace under the ignoble axe of a machine. . . . They fell back a step before God. The French republic brought them other news of Providence; a *parvenu* soldier intimated to them the order of it. He destroyed on the field of Wagram even the name of the Holy Roman Empire, so long the adversary of the papacy; and even he, having dared to lay his hands upon it, victim of the same faults of which he was the glorious instrument of chastisement, was seen all at once to expire like a fallen star in the deep and solitary waves of the Atlantic. He left behind him a son adorned with his features, his glory, and his misfortunes—a young heart in whom remembrance and hope daily reconstructed the country. But his father had given him too weighty a name: *the King of Rome* sank under this burden, like a precious flower which does not attain to its perfection, bowed down by the etiquette to which a friendly but an imprudent hand had condemned him.

Now, gentlemen, the papacy has reached a more complete era of its existence than any which preceded it. The reaction which took place in the public mind against it, because of the events of the middle ages, has nearly reached its end. Men have understood that the nature of its development at that epoch arose from circumstances and not from pretensions, and that this development was favorable to the nations, to Europe, and to mankind: that the popes, in the freedom of their election, in the sanctity of marriages, in the observance of ecclesiastical celibacy, in the integrity of the hierarchy, maintained in reality a just and civilizing influence. Men have compre-

hended that the sovereign pontiff could not be in dependence to any Christian princes, and that his independence, which is essential to religion, is also essential to the peace of the divers states. The Roman empire, the Eastern empire, the Western empire, no longer exist; no power can pretend to govern the Holy See, and public opinion accords to it an honorable neutrality in wars between divers powers. If, on another hand, we examine the spiritual supremacy of the popes, we find it secured by a possession of eighteen centuries, which schism and heresy have alone and in vain disputed. We see Jansenism destroyed, Protestantism inclining towards its fall, the Greek schism degraded in the east under the yoke of the Russians and the Turks, Mahometanism exhausted—in a word, everywhere we see error weak or withered away; whilst the Roman Church, ever the same, and always aided by God, remains firm on the wreck of the past. The scars which events have left upon her shine upon her body, and render it more difficult for the sword to touch her. She has preserved from the era of martyrdom passive courage against persecution; from the era of the Bas-empire the knowledge of doubtful positions; from the era of Charlemagne sovereignty; from the era of Gregory VII. the knowledge of great political ends; from the era of reaction a more profound knowledge of herself and others; and from the present era an invincible trust in God. If you do not yet clearly discover her actual triumph, it is because the triumph of the Church is never, at any given moment, visible. Looking at only one point in the course of time, the bark of Peter appeared ready to sink, and the faithful are always ready to cry, “*Lord, save us, we perish!*”<sup>1</sup> But in looking back over the succession of ages, the Church appears in her strength; and we understand that saying of Jesus Christ in the tempest, “*Man of little faith, why hast thou doubted?*”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 8, v. 25.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 14, v. 31.

## FIFTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE INSTRUCTION AND SALVATION OF MANKIND BEFORE  
THE DEFINITIVE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

If I mistake not, a thought has preoccupied your minds up to this moment. Whilst we have been exposing to you the need of a teaching Church, its constitution, its rational, moral, and infallible authority, the miraculous establishment of its unity, you have said within yourselves: Yes, a teaching Church is necessary to the world, the constitution of the teaching Catholic Church is admirable, her rational and moral authority surpasses all others, and she has given proof of her infallibility: the establishment of her unity in the world, in the midst of so many difficulties and changes, bears the mark of divinity! Perhaps, however, you ask at the same time, "How was it, if that teaching Church is necessary to mankind, that she was established so late? Is it because mankind, did not stand in need of teaching before Jesus Christ? Or because God, before the coming of his Son, disdained the salvation of men, and willed not to redeem them before a day and an hour determined upon by him?" But you remember the striking words of St. Paul: "*I desire, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made to God for all*

men . . . for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus: who gave Himself a redemption for all, a testimony in due times.”<sup>1</sup> That being the case, how was it that the establishment of the Church, destined to teach and to save men, took place so late? It is true, gentlemen, that the Church, under her present form, only dates from Jesus Christ; but, taken in her essence and total reality, she traces her existence back even to the cradle of creation, according to that energetic expression of St. Epiphanius, “The commencement of all things is the holy Catholic Church.”<sup>2</sup> The Church, in fact, is but the community of intelligent beings with God by faith, hope, and charity; and that community formed itself for mankind as soon as man left the hands of God. From the beginning it had its priests, its sacrifices, its laws, its teaching. The object of this *Conference* is to show you what that teaching was, and in what manner it was effectual for the salvation of mankind, even with all the degradations which it had to undergo in the course of time.

The extreme point of enlightenment in this world is Christianity, or the knowledge of God, the Creator, Legislator, and Saviour; and the extreme point of good is also Christianity, or the imitation of God, manifested in his nature by the creation and redemption. And, on another hand, the extreme point of darkness in this world is atheism, that is to say, ignorance or absolute negation of God; and the extreme point of evil is also atheism, or the destruction of every basis which serves to establish the distinction of good and evil.

From thence it follows that the providence of God tends

<sup>1</sup> 1st Timothy, ch. 2, v. 1, and following.

<sup>2</sup> Against Heresies. Lib. 1, ch. 5.



to bring all men to Christianity, or to the greatest enlightenment and to the highest good ; and on the contrary, that the Devil tends to lead all men to atheism, or to the greatest darkness and to the greatest evil. Now, the one and the other, God and the Devil, the friend and the enemy of mankind, possessed no more natural means for inducing men to follow their designs than teaching, since man by his nature is an instructed being. And it was necessary that that teaching should date from the origin even of the world, since God has willed from the beginning to save men by light and good, and the Devil has tried to destroy them by darkness and evil. We will pursue this twofold teaching, gentlemen, by commencing with that of light.

God chose two means for instructing man, tradition and conscience. By tradition God outwardly manifested himself to men by means of his word and of perceptible acts, which the memory was capable of perpetuating easily ; by conscience he manifested himself inwardly to men by imprinting within them, in an indestructible manner, the distinction of good and evil, which comprises the existence of a superior being, the foundation of that distinction. Tradition alone would but have placed man in communication with truth in a mechanical manner, if we may so speak, without any internal indication of the want of and desire for truth ; conscience alone would have placed them in communication with truth by the want of and desire for it, but without any regulation of the feeling, which is in its nature subject to illusion, excess, and change. If, on the contrary, the internal and external actions correspond—if the voice of God in tradition and the voice of God in the conscience appeal to each other—if, like the two towers which you saw on entering this church of Notre Dame, they keep at your right hand and at your left during the whole of your career, urging and addressing you, there would be left to you no other re-



sources for escaping from their action than those which overwhelm all who dare to exercise them before God and themselves.

God taught men, then, by conscience and by tradition. He formed their souls to his likeness by an infusion of light and goodness—a corruptible gift, but incapable of being totally destroyed—an imperfect gift, but which, joined to tradition, or to the divine word, taught the posterity of man, from age to age, enough to conduct them to their glorious end. Our first father learned from God himself what that end was, from whence it came, and whither it ought to tend; he penetrated, with a glance, all the secrets and all the sources of his destiny; his internal enlightenment, vivified and encouraged by that external light, reposed in the combined peace of evidence and faith. The stream of tradition sprung from God in the consciences of mankind; it remained only to sustain and renew it in its course, according to the necessities created by the inconstancy and forgetfulness of succeeding generations. Five times in forty centuries God opened its sources and enlarged its banks, by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ, and five times with solemn events, which filled the world with their fame. In Adam, the Divine Word was illustrated by the Creation; in Noah, by the Deluge; in Abraham, by the foundation of the Jewish people; in Moses, by the laws and thunders of Sinai; and in Jesus Christ, by the marvels of his birth, of his life and death. And to each of these accessions of the Word, of these earthquakes of tradition, it was impossible for mankind not to listen and hear. How could the ear of the human race be shut in presence of all creation, which raised itself around it, and bore to it on every breeze the name of God? How could it be deaf after the Deluge had flowed over the crimes of the world, and had given to it such a terrible lesson of divine justice? How could it

be deaf to the names of Abraham and Moses, who, by Egypt, by the Red Sea, by the Euphrates, by the dispersion of the ten tribes of Israel and the captivity of Judah in Babylon, were constantly thrown into the centre of the political movements of the universe? How, above all, when Jesus Christ dispersed his apostles to bear the good tidings to the islands, to the seas, to the mountains, to the deserts, to all the nations? And yet we see here only the grand course of the Divine Word. The innumerable ramifications which have become detached to open a passage even to the more distant extremities of humanity necessarily escape us, although we here and there discover certain traces of them. Seven hundred years before Jesus Christ, for instance, the prophet Jonas shook Nineveh by announcing the vengeance of God, and reduced to ashes that old capital, which we should have supposed lost in the most antique ignorance of the things belonging to salvation.

St. Paul, then, wrote truly to the Hebrews: "*God having spoken on divers occasions, and many ways, in times past, to thee fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by his Son.*"<sup>1</sup> And remark, gentlemen, that the progress of tradition was not confined to its renewal and expansion, it was also shown in its form. Up to Moses tradition is oral; by Moses it is written; by Jesus Christ it became social. In proportion as mankind resists the teaching of truth, God establishes it on a more powerful basis, and communicates to it a more active and enduring element. What is there, then, to complain of? Was it necessary that enlightenment, to be justified, should attack the moral liberty of man? Conscience and tradition performed their duties, it was for man to perform his. They performed their duties as they do now, gentlemen, before you. For what, I ask you, is our strength in

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews, ch. 1, v. 1.

addressing you? What is it which commands you to listen whilst we announce such extraordinary things to you, so extraordinary for those who have been brought up without knowing or practicing them. Ah! it is because we stir within you the fibre where the truth of our word is externally living and enchained; it is because conscience speaks to you with us of God; it is because tradition, of which we are the organ, has in the recesses of your soul a sister, a witness, an accomplice! God pursues you with that two-edged sword of conscience and tradition which the Apocalypse exhibits to us coming out of the sacred mouth of Jesus Christ.

What, gentlemen, could the Devil accomplish on his side towards the destruction of light and good in the world? He could do no more than teach, he could only oppose teaching to teaching, corrupt tradition and conscience. I say, corrupt tradition and conscience, for he was not permitted to create tradition and conscience. He create! create tradition! Tradition is a primitive word, a word which is an element of thought, a word which founds, which has a posterity without ancestors; and no creature, above all no fallen creature, could pronounce such tidings. Finite creatures compose and decompose the word like every other thing; they do not create it. The Spirit of Evil was, then, incapable of establishing an atheistical tradition; his only resource was to crawl along behind truth in order to dishonor it, like those weak and cowardly animals who pursue their prey in the night and treasonably murder it. He was yet less able to create conscience, that is to say, to kindle in man a primordial light of error, to produce there an original taste for atheism; because if error and impiety were able to subsist of themselves, evil would be equal to good, nothingness equal to existence. In a word, the Devil had power to corrupt, not to edify; God, and the Christian by God,

alone can edify. For this reason we say of a pious man that he is a man of edification: it is impossible to say more of a creature. For edification comes immediately after creation. Between you and ourselves, gentlemen, the question is to know who edifies, who edifies in the soul, in the body, in society, and who edifies for eternity. Dare you to think that you are the men of edification? Ah! I see plainly that you destroy; and when you have destroyed, I see you also extending your suplicating hands towards religion, saying to it, "In pity spare to us a little of your mantle to cover us, for the clouds are heavy and it is cold."

Let us consider, then, gentlemen, the spirit of darkness at war with tradition and conscience, the spirit of ruin with the spirit of edification. This is always our subject, since I shall show you in it the superiority of divine teaching, even in the triumphs of perverse teaching.

As God opened five principal sources of tradition, the enemy of man degraded men by five principal means; namely, by polytheism and dualism before Jesus Christ, and by Judaism, Mahometanism, and heresy after Jesus Christ. Polytheism was a corruption of the idea of God by the multiplication of his being and the degradation of his nature; dualism, a corruption of the ideas of good and evil, by attributing to them two principles, each co-eternal with the other; Judaism, a corruption of the historical communications between God and man, by taking away their true signification; Mahometanism, a corruption of Christianity itself by a learned and hideous mixture of the dogma of the unity of God with heathen morals; heresy, a successive corruption of all the Catholic dogmas, by the substitution of the interpretation of private judgment for the infallible authority of the Church. At each movement which God made for enlightening and sanctifying the world, the Spirit of Darkness made a

parallel one on his side, so much the more adroit as that of God was the more profound. But all his efforts did not succeed in establishing atheism, which was his ultimate object, nor in overturning the idea of good and evil. Polytheism, although the most gross of all the degradations of truth, still preserved among men the idea of the divinity, and even of a Supreme God, the practice of worship, sacrifice, prayer, remorse, atonement, the fear of penalty in another world, and the hope of recompense for those who were religious. Dualism maintained with *éclat* the distinction of good and evil, even because it exaggerated it. Judaism, in keeping aloof from the Church of which it guarded the original titles, imparted to its witness the lustre of indisputable impartiality. Mahometanism propagated even to the most inaccessible limits of Africa and Asia the knowledge of the unity of God, the names of the patriarchs and of Jesus Christ himself; and heresy adds to the points which it does not attack the strength of its tradition and of its enmity.

Thus, gentlemen, the teaching of error still turned to the profit of the teaching of truth: God, religion, and duty remained visible on the horizon of all the nations, even of the most depraved, as the light of day appears to the world even under the accumulated vapors which forebode the tempest. Error has everywhere more or less played the part which Bible societies now play: in desiring to spread heresy they spread also the seeds of truth.

There remained the conscience of mankind to corrupt. The Devil raised up against its eloquence the terrible eloquence of the senses. Two voices spoke from the heart of man, one which led him to respect for himself, to purity and holiness; the other which invited him to stoop even to the brutality of animals. This last was but too often listened to; but God kept a secret in reserve against the success of evil, which should increase a hundredfold the



empire of the profaned conscience. Remorse sprung from the sense of degradation. Fallen man felt the worm of reproach moving in the depths of his being ; his dignity appeared to him by his disgrace ; weariness, disgust, and contempt of himself seized him like so many executioners, and revealed to him that a God always present in his soul avenged its immortal majesty against himself. And as remorse arose from the fall, restoration sprung from remorse.

Oh, yes, poor soul ! wounded by evil, you cannot extinguish conscience within you ; and the more the senses bring you down, the more sudden resurrections there may be within you, resurrections like those of Lazarus, which draw the soul from a tomb, and prove that even degradation contains a heaven of life and immortality.

An arm more powerful than conscience was wanting ; it was found in reasoning. Reasoning is a faculty of man, an admirable instrument given to finite beings, who, not being able, like God, to comprehend truth at a glance, must discover and explore it as they explore a mine, in which each vein leads to the trace of another. But the fault of reasoning is, that at a certain depth it looses its lucidity, and the charm of deduction in its advanced stages is no longer seized except by highly-practiced minds. Now, as we have seen, the number of these subtle and certain minds is very limited ; the mass of mankind is composed of bad logicians, and they are easily seduced by the resemblance of sophistry to the severe reality of argument. Everybody understands tradition, which is but an accomplished fact ; everybody understands conscience, which is but a cry ; but reasoning plays by a thousand shifts in the labyrinth of the mind, and it needed all the sagacity of Aristotle, one of the most penetrating thinkers who ever existed, to unravel, in long volumes, its many windings. This was, then, the true sceptre of error ; and that which

the corruption of tradition and conscience was unable to effect upon mankind reasoning was called to perform. In fact, whilst degraded tradition had left everywhere traces of truth ; whilst conscience, enslaved by lust, had everywhere and on all occasions caused groanings of the spirit ; reasoning had alone the glory of demolishing the sacred temple of truth and goodness even to its very foundations. It was the parent of atheism, the author of utter blasphemy ; it has imparted nothingness to some souls which have been amused by it. Nevertheless, God, who should be master in all things, prepared also a remedy against this terrible enemy ; and that remedy is the anarchy produced by reasoning in its own empire. We see all those illustrious thinkers, those rare geniuses, endowed with the most magnificent intellectual gifts, unable to found a durable school, succeeding each other like the waves which break upon the shore and swallow up each other by the effect even of their own motion. Mankind was warned that here there was neither knowledge, nor security, nor peace for it, not even a cabin where it could sleep for one night, not even a dream in which to take refuge and rock itself. Rationalism, the deadly amusement of some distinguished minds, the source of the most complete ruin, passed always sufficiently far from mankind to leave to it conscience and tradition : conscience in its bosom, tradition in its sanctuaries.

The inference to be drawn from all this, gentlemen, is, that God constantly provided for the teaching of the world before as well as after Jesus Christ ; not always in the same degree, it is true, but always sufficiently to render salvation possible to men of good will. I shall end in showing you this by briefly exposing to you the conditions necessary to salvation.

These conditions are three in number : We must practice truth to the extent to which it is known to us ; we

must embrace and practice truth, superior to the truth which is engendered within us, as soon as it is possible for us to take cognizance of it; we must die loving God above all things.

In the first place, we must practice truth to the extent to which it is known to us, for he who does not practice the truth which he knows, hates or despises God, who is truth itself: he is condemned by his own conscience. He, on the contrary, who, with his heart, and mind, and strength cleaves to all the truth which is known to him, is safe and sound before God, according to the express doctrine of St. Paul: "*Glory, and honor, and peace to every one that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, for there is no respect of persons with God. . . . For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles who have not the law do by nature those things that are of the law, these having not the law are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts within themselves accusing them in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the Gospel.*"<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, we must embrace and practice truth superior to that which is engendered within us, as soon as it is possible for us to take cognizance of it. He who rejects the higher truth which he might know is as guilty as he who does not practice the inferior truth born within him. In his heart he abhors truth, because a closer acquaintance with it requires greater sacrifices from him. You will say, perhaps, that it is difficult to pass from the lower to the higher degrees of truth. But whence arises the difficulty if it is not within ourselves, if it is not because we do not practice truth to the extent to which it is known to us?

<sup>1</sup> Romans, ch. 2, v. 10, and following verses.

What! you wish God to impart to you more enlightenment, and you do not even perform the duties which the lesser light imposes upon you? You ask for a mountain, and you are unable to carry a grain of sand. Listen to the divine oracle: "*He that doeth truth cometh to the light*;"<sup>1</sup> that is to say, He who yields to the light which he has, attains to the perception of light which before was unknown to him. And, moreover, "*This is the judgment, because the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, for their works were evil; for every one that doeth evil hateth the light and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved.*"<sup>2</sup> Whoever you may be assembled here, whether you first saw the day among Polytheists, Jews, Mahometans, Protestants, or Catholics, the light of God has shone upon you more or less—do you follow that light? Do you perform that which tradition and conscience require of you? If you do not, to what purpose should God give you more light? He would only add to your guilt.

The third condition of salvation is, to die loving God above all things; for such is the end of Christianity. "*The end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart.*"<sup>3</sup> "*Every one that loveth God is born of God.*"<sup>4</sup> It is in order to love God that we should know him; he sent his own Son that we might be brought to love him; he who loves him is saved. Now one of two things must happen: either the man who dies has advanced sufficiently near to the light, that is to say, to Christianity, to have possessed during his life all the means of loving God as he ought to be loved; or, after having known and practiced truth as much as he was able, he has not attained to sufficient light to have possessed the means of loving God sufficiently. In the first case the man is saved by the ordinary means

<sup>1</sup> St. John, ch. 3, v. 21.

<sup>2</sup> St. John, ch. 3, v. 19, 20.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy, ch. 1, v. 5.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John, ch. 4, v. 7.



of Providence; in the second he may receive, at the hour of his death, that which was wanting to him without his fault, and he is saved by the extraordinary means of Providence, by that infusion of grace and love which the Church calls *baptism by fire*. But observe well, gentlemen, no one is saved by extraordinary means, if the ordinary means were not wanting to him. See, then, why every man is bound to embrace higher truth than that which he first knew, because it is that higher truth which should naturally lead him to the love which saves.

I resume, gentlemen. There are two cities in the world, the city of light and the city of darkness. The city of light is taught by God, by means of tradition and conscience, for the purpose of leading men to the knowledge and imitation of God; the city of darkness is taught by the Devil, by the degradation of tradition and of conscience, and by reasoning, in order to lead men to atheism, that is to say, to ignorance of God, and to the negation of good and evil. But neither by degrading tradition and conscience, nor by reasoning, will the city of darkness ever prevail against the city of light, and efface from the world the idea of the Divinity and the distinction of good and evil. Every man is born, then, in light and in good to a certain degree. If he desire to be saved he must practice truth to the degree to which he knows it—must rise to the higher degree, and towards perfect truth, as much as he can—and in that way he will attain the love which brings salvation by the ordinary ways of Providence, should he have known and practiced perfect truth, or by the extraordinary ways of Providence should he, in spite of himself, have been hindered from knowing and practicing perfect truth. That being the case, gentlemen, your destiny is in your own hands; God has not been wanting towards men, man has failed in his duty to God.



## SIXTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE CONNECTION OF THE CHURCH WITH THE TEMPORAL  
ORDER.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN the Catholic Church came to establish herself in the Roman Empire she found there only one authority, the civil authority. The emperors, the heirs of the republic, had added to their titles of Cæsar and Augustus that of Sovereign Pontiff; and the Church, in establishing herself, had no less pretension than this : to take away from them that title of Sovereign Pontiff, and to raise up, by the side of the civil power, a power purely spiritual. This she accomplished ; and, from that time, these two powers have marched side by side, sometimes supporting each other, sometimes struggling against each other, at others reposing to recover strength.

But by what right did the Church thus divide the power of the Cæsars, sever in two the throne of the emperors, and place the apostolic by the side of the imperial throne ? When a temporal throne enters into this basilic, by what right does the episcopal throne maintain its place ? Here is a question worthy of the attention of serious minds ; above all, after the long combat in which these two powers have been engaged, after so many prejudices have been accumulated against the Church, prejudices so strong

that, to listen to them, it would seem that all which the Church possesses is but a concession of time, and not of eternity. But, before we examine by what right the power of the Church has established itself, we must understand the nature and extent of that power, without which it will be impossible to appreciate its right.

Now the nature of a power is determined by its object, and the object of the power of the Church is clearly shown in these celebrated words : "*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations ; baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Hqly Ghost. Teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you.*"<sup>1</sup> Teach truth, diffuse grace, lead to the practice of virtue ; truth, an invisible and spiritual thing, of which here below, in the realities which surround us, we have but a faint idea ; grace, also invisible and spiritual in its nature ; virtue, *virtus*, that which makes the man, the *vir*, a thing equally invisible and spiritual, although it manifests itself by external acts, because its principle and source lie in the hidden abyss of conscience. Truth, grace, and virtue—this is the three-fold object of the power of the Church.

As to the extent of that power, it depends upon its action ; for the action which a power exercises around itself is the measure of its extent. And that action itself, in its form and extent, is determined by the means which the power is obliged to employ for the attainment of its object. Now the Church, charged with the propagation of truth, grace, and virtue, can accomplish that mission only by the employment of five means. Truth requires the free preaching of the divine word ; grace is communicated to us by the free oblation of the sacrifice, and the free administration of the sacraments ; virtue developes itself by the free practice of its acts ; and, in fine, nothing of this can be effected without a priesthood which unceasingly makes

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 28, v. 19, 20.

truth known, invites grace, excites to virtue, and consequently without the free perpetuity of the sacerdotal hierarchy. The power of the Church, considered with reference to its extent or its action, for they are the same thing, consists, then, in the free preaching of the Gospel, the free oblation of the sacrifice, and the free administration of the sacraments, in the free practice of virtue and in the free perpetuity of her hierarchy.

The Church thus reaches two orders, the one internal, the other external. By the first, the interior order, she is in contact with that which is higher than man; she derives her strength from grace. By the second, the exterior order, she is in contact with that which is human, she derives her strength from freedom of action. And thus, when we are asked by what right the Church has taken away a part of the power of the Cæsars, it is as if we were asked by what right Christian liberty is established. For the Church has not taken from the Cæsars the internal and divine power of grace—they did not possess it; her only quarrels with them have been about the external power, which is that of liberty. Consequently, between Cæsar and the Church the question is reduced to this: "By what right is Christian liberty established?"

I answer, first, by divine right. It is not, in fact, by a grant of princes that it has been given to us to teach the world. It was not the Cæsars, but Jesus Christ, who said to us, "*Go, and teach all nations.*" It was not the Cæsars, but Jesus Christ, who said to us, "*Remit sins; whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.*" It was not the Cæsars, but Jesus Christ, who said to us, "*Crucify your flesh, with its affections and lusts.*" It was not the Cæsars, but Jesus Christ, who said to us, "*Receive the Holy Ghost.*" Consequently, we do not derive our liberty from the Cæsars, we derive it from God, and we shall keep it because it comes from Him. Princes might com-

bine together to combat the prerogatives of the Church, call them by opprobrious names in order to make them odious, say that it is an exorbitant power, which ruins states; we shall let them do so, and we shall continue to preach truth, to remit sins, to combat vice, to communicate the spirit of God. If they drive us into exile, we shall do so in exile; if they cast us into prisons, we shall do so in prisons; if they enchain us in mines, we shall do so there; if they drive us from one kingdom, we shall pass into another. It was said to us that, even to the day when each will be called to give an account of his deeds, we shall not exhaust the kingdoms of the earth. But if we are pursued on all sides, if the power of Antichrist should spread itself over the whole surface of the world, then, as at the commencement of the Church, we shall fly into tombs and catacombs. And if at last we are pursued even there, if they make us mount their scaffolds, in every noble heart of man we shall find a last asylum, because we shall not have despaired of the truth, the justice, and the liberty of mankind.

I say the liberty of mankind, for to whom has Christian liberty been given? To whom has Jesus Christ transmitted it in patrimony with his blood? To all; and particularly to the poor, the lowly, and the wretched. We hear every day of new theories of civilization, of agrarian laws, and of the rights of the people; but this is their heritage! You have knowledge, renown, the pomps, the honors and joys of this world. God could not, or would not, give this to all, it matters little; but he has given his word to all. Would you deprive those who have nothing of the right of hearing it? Would you deprive them of these declarations: "*Blessed are the poor! Blessed are they who weep?*" Beware, in depriving others, that you do not also deprive yourselves of them! Sooner or later the world will fail you, and then you will be glad to find the liberty of

the cross. The cross is the sceptre of the poor; it is also the last which the hands of kings bear. Respect it for others in pity to yourselves.

I say, then, that Christian liberty, which constitutes the power of the Church in its exterior relations, comes from God, and that it is the patrimony of mankind. I add that it is the natural right; because it is but the means of propagating truth, grace, and virtue, three things of which man cannot be deprived, and which are essentially free in face of all human power.

To commence with truth. It is, in fact, a thing which appertains to no one, which no sovereign can claim as his exclusive right. Truth is for all, and there are no rights against it, being, as it is, the source of all right. What right can men have against truth? That of hindering it from being known? But that right would imply the negation of all justice; for truth is the right of all, for this one reason, that man is an intelligent being. Without doubt, truth is expressed and transmitted by language; but language, when it only expresses truth, confounds itself with truth; it is only truth communicated—that is to say, truth exercising its right to make itself known. Would you say that truth has the right to be known, that there are no rights against it, but that princes have the right of discerning that which is truth and that which is error? Even should this right appertain to the civil power it would be fruitless against the Church, who is truth and the depositary of truth; but there is much wanting before it can be said, in an absolute manner, that the right of distinguishing between truth and error belongs to the civil power. That power is composed of a certain number of men who are not infallible, and who are only able to declare that such a thing appears to them to be true or false, that such a thing appears useful or prejudicial to the State, without their possessing the right



of giving an obligatory judgment between truth and error. No one can be held in conscience to believe that which the civil power believes, and consequently the right of discerning truth and error does not appertain to it; for, if this right appertained to it, each citizen would be obliged in conscience to adhere to its declared decisions. Who would not laugh at the idea of a human power advertising on the doors of Notre Dame what is truth to-day, and, this evening, what is to be truth to-morrow? It is true, princes have attempted this more than once; but if others were weak enough to submit to that abject servitude, the Church always resisted it at the price of her blood, and has opposed to an ambition as ridiculous as it is disastrous on the part of kings the double safeguard of profound contempt and profound respect.

Grace, like truth, is of itself free. For what is grace? It is an action of God upon man. How should man have the right to hinder this action? It is true that grace is conferred by perceptible signs, but these signs, like language with regard to truth, are only the expression of grace—grace communicating itself in a certain way. In consequence, the sacraments and grace are indivisible; the one cannot be attacked without the other. We will not do the injustice to the temporal power, when, at a time not far removed from us, they sent their officers into our temples to seize by arrest the sacred hosts—the body of the living God—we will not do them the injustice to believe that their anger was raised against nothing but a little bread. They did not attack these perceptible things, but the power which lay hidden in them. And what is that strength, if it is not that which is imparted to us by faith, which results from the action of God upon us? If it were not God which I bear to the altar, if it were only bread, you would not need so many battalions to snatch it from my hands.

There remains virtue. And it is here, above all, that the light is striking; for what rights can men have against virtue? Man is born for good; it is more than his right, it is his duty. Are there any rights against duty? I determine to be humble, meek, chaste; who has any rights against humility, meekness, and chastity? I determine to quit the garments of the rich, and put on, from love, those of the poor; who has any rights against a decent and fraternal vestment? I determine to sell my patrimony and distribute it among the suffering members of Jesus Christ and humanity; who has any right to put guards against a heart which opens itself, and to proscribe charity? Ah! if, when we first came to announce the Gospel, men had been able to say that we were incendiaries, that we troubled the empire and wished to overthrow it, the civil power would have been justified in guarding itself against us. But "Go into your prisons," said Tertullian, "and see if you can find there one single Christian accused of crime. Those whom you retain there are accused of but one thing—of bearing the name of Christians. And what do you ask of them as the price of their liberty? To take between their fingers a little incense and throw it before a statue. It is not then," continued he, "because of their vices that you accuse them, but because of their virtues." Let us be candid, gentlemen. We can dispute about truth—here below it is given up to the disputations of men—but never about virtue. Virtue shines with a lustre which leaves no hold to injustice and tyranny; and although Christianity may not be free on the score of truth, it must be on that of virtue.

You see, gentlemen, not only is the power of the Church founded on divine right, not only is it legitimate by virtue of natural right, but it is no other thing, in last analysis, than the actual exercise of human liberty. Whoever attacks the Church attacks our liberty. I do not say our

political and civil liberty, but our moral liberty, that which makes us men. As an intellectual being, man has a right to know and to communicate truth; as a moral being, he has a right to practice truth, and to teach it to others; as a religious being, he has a right to communicate with God, and to receive his inspirations and his gifts. Liberty of truth, liberty of grace, liberty of virtue: this is all the power of the Church, all her right, and all her ambition.

Thus, with reference to the moral liberty and the dignity of man, the establishment of the Church was a benevolent act, the marvel of which is more than ever visible. Formerly the civil power not only regulated the interests of life, of security, of property, of honor, and national independence, but also moral and religious affairs, and that accumulation of powers, without being useful to religion and morality, which had fallen into frightful excesses, rendered despotism more deeply seated and more indestructible. By the establishment of the Church the civil power has lost the government of human opinions, and is no longer master of the divine laws. Religion subsists of itself, of its native, independent vigor, counterbalancing by its influence all the exorbitant influences which would tend to prevail over and oppress the nations. The action exercised in this regard by the Church in society has so much influenced customs and morals that men have even attributed the rights of truth to error, and that all sects have aspired to the same liberty as that conquered by the Catholic Church. We no longer conceive the civil power exercising religious power in its name; and it is not the least dishonor of Protestantism that it has made of the prince the exterior chief of Christianity in the divers Protestant nations.

But, do you say, if the establishment of the spiritual power in the world has caused a development favorable to the dignity and to the moral liberty of man, has it not

introduced a principle of dangerous anarchy into civil communities? Instead of the unity of power which maintained social order, there will be henceforth in each Catholic State two powers having the same subjects. If the spiritual and temporal powers had never yet disagreed about their rights and privileges, perhaps that state of things would be tolerable. But everybody knows that, although there are some things evidently spiritual, and others evidently temporal, there are many of a mixed and obscure kind which are a source of constant and perpetual contestation between the two powers. History is full of these examples. Sometimes the Church, sometimes the Empire, has been victorious; bloody quarrels have stained the annals of the Church and of nations. By what means can these questions be peaceably settled when they arise? Who is to be judge between the two parties, since they are each independent of the other, and have no common superior? War, in such cases, decides between temporal sovereigns. Is war also to decide between the spiritual and the civil powers? If it be war, the Church is not, then, founded upon the sole strength of divine grace and persuasion, and the Catholic States would be menaced with perpetual civil war. If it be not war, what is to decide these contestations?

Gentlemen, let us first remark that contest is the present state of humanity; that good and evil, flesh and spirit, kingdoms against kingdoms, ideas against ideas, are in a state of permanent combat, and that order springs from this combat. Order is no other thing than the assemblage of many elements; and the more harmony is composed of partial discords, the more its power is manifested. Let us not wonder, then, that God established a kind of dualism in society. No power is limited but by another power; and that which is so admirable is, that the spiritual power, in limiting the civil power, strengthens it on an immovable



basis. Princes have never lived longer, have never enjoyed more the love of the nations which they governed, than since the establishment of the Church; and in proportion as we see the Church strengthen herself in a State, we see also the civil power more respected, as we see it diminish in proportion as the Church loses her influence. The fact admits of no reply. God, in establishing the Church, has not only labored for human liberty, but also for the protection of human authority. We may say of her what Tacitus said of Nerva, *that she has reconciled liberty and the command*. If you seek to know why, you will find that the real business of the Church is to cause all rights to be respected, by making truth known and causing it to be respected, and that, in consequence, all rights, those of the sovereign and those of the people, have in her a supporter.

As to the questions which arise between the two powers on peculiar matters, let us first observe that the fundamental rights of the Church are as clear as the day; that, on mixed questions, the two powers have the means of agreeing by concordats, and by making reciprocal concessions; that the Church, having no armed force at her disposition, can never violently establish an injustice. This, gentlemen, is the great privilege of the Church in this world—she can do no injustice by force of arms. If she acts, it is always with the consent of nations or sovereigns, under the protection of liberty or public law. I admit that the civil power has the chance of misusing its force against the Church, but the Church would only oppose to it two means of defence, martyrdom and God: martyrdom, in choosing rather to suffer death than do any thing against the rights accorded by God to his Church, and, next, God himself, who is her founder, her guide, the instructor of her weakness in the midst of the world, who has promised not to abandon her. There are many instances of this in history, and we might produce recent



examples which are present to all minds. What was Pius VII. against Napoleon? Notwithstanding, Pius VII. struggled with the master of the world by the single power of his conscience, and he vanquished, without arms, the man of armies.

When you ask who is to be judge between the spiritual and the civil powers, you forget that there exists a God who governs the world, and you ask for a solution which, if it were visibly possible without divine intervention, would drive God from the general government of human affairs. God is necessary; he is the focus to which everything merges, and he manifests his action by events which change the appearance of centuries, which possess a peculiar character of unforeseen power, by which it is easy to recognize them.

No cause, then, of suspicion and hatred exists against the Church, in consequence of her definitive establishment in the midst of society, of space, and time. She has received all, usurped nothing, and blessed everything; she has received her rights from God and nature. She has neither usurped truth, which is for all; nor grace, which belongs only to God; nor virtue, which is the common duty; she has blessed liberty by the use which she has made of it, and authority in permitting it to share her own crown. Yet she has never ceased to suffer persecution, notwithstanding the splendor of her legitimacy, and of her good deeds. How can this thing be? What breeze bears to her from each age the noise of outrage? I will tell you, gentlemen. Two spirits pursue the Church, and will pursue her always: the spirit of domination and the spirit of license. The spirit of domination could not endure the liberty which the Church enjoys, and the spirit of license abhors the truth, grace, and virtue of which the Church is the indefatigable apostle and the heroic prop. The spirit of domination drives nations into ancient or

modern Protestantism in order to become the sole master of the community ; the spirit of license drives them into yet wider revolt, in order to emancipate pride and lust wounded by the mystery of the cross. It would seem that the Church should yield under the double effort which tends to the same end, and which leagues mankind against her by these two extremities, by the throne and by the people. But, O depths of the ways of God ! the spirit of domination hates the spirit of license, and the spirit of license hates the spirit of domination. When both of them rushed with increased eagerness upon the Church, and already rejoiced at her ruin, they met suddenly face to face, and rushed against each other. A blind fury precipitates them one upon the other ; they want each to reap alone the spoils of the Church, and their reciprocal hate is increased by the presence of their prey. From time to time they pause and regard each other with astonishment, they feel that they want to be united to destroy their victim, they seek for themselves ties of kindred. The spirit of domination says to itself, "Am I not the father of license ?" And the spirit of license says to itself, "Am I not the father of domination ?" Vain efforts ! They hate the Church well enough to be willing to league themselves together against her, but they hate each other too well for any other hate to serve them as a bond of union. O justice of God ! make way for the justice of God !

In an oasis of Arabia a lamb was feeding. The roaring of a lion is heard, the king of the desert appears, he is about to spring with one bound upon the defenceless animal ? but lo ! another, moved by the same hunger, leaps from the other side of the desert. They regard each other, they struggle, they tear each other, whilst the lamb, safe and sound, feeds quietly beside their rage. The two lions are the world ; the lamb is the Church : the world is divided, the Church is one.

## SEVENTH CONFERENCE.

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### OF THE COERCIVE POWER OF THE CHURCH.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

No power can be conceived without sovereignty—that is to say, without being independent of those whom it governs. A power which would be dependent upon those whom it governs could never be a power, but a servitude. The spiritual power has, then, necessarily received a spiritual sovereignty, and it was given to it in that celebrated text, “*Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven.*”<sup>1</sup> This power of binding and loosing in the spiritual order is no other thing than the right of governing in full independence, the divine things of which the trust has been confided to the Church. The Church was not sent to men as a slave, but as a mistress; she was not sent to dispense the word, and grace, and all the designs of her ministration, as they wished it, but to distribute them with wisdom and justice, to admit those whom she considers worthy to participation in them, to reject those whom she considers unworthy; otherwise she would act blindly, and would lose souls instead of saving them. We purpose, then, gentlemen, to examine

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 18, v. 18.

to-day the coercive power of the Church, or her power of binding and loosing, which reduces itself to the right of imposing penances in the conscience, and the right of excommunication in its external jurisdiction.

It is in the nature of things that all evil engenders misery for the person who commits it, without which there would be no distinction between good and evil. This misery is the penalty. But as the object of penalty is not a sterile vengeance, inasmuch as it tends to the amelioration of the guilty at the same time as to the reparation of evil, it follows that every penalty in the present state is a mixture of justice and mercy. Where there is only justice, the guilty person is sacrificed ; where there is only mercy, good is compromised. That established, we recognize on earth three penal powers—nature, the civil community and the Church. Nature punishes evil in the body and in the soul : in the body by disease, suffering and premature death ; in the soul by degrading it, and taking away from it all its purity, sensibility and holiness. There is no mercy : nature causes its avenging sting to be felt to its very extremity. When it has branded a man it rarely permits him ever to rise again. If I consider the civil community, even there I find mercy absent. Nature disgraces, society dishonors ; for wherever the penalty is public, dishonor is inevitable ; and wherever dishonor punishes, mercy does not appear. Neither nature, then, nor society possesses a perfect penalty—a penalty which wounds and heals, which punishes and reconciles, which strikes whilst loving, and humbles but to raise up again. Nature bears the inexorable sword of sorrow and death, society has its axe and its executioners ; neither the one nor the other knows the vase in which the unction of mercy and the honor of repentance lie hidden. This mysterious aroma was confided to the Church ; she alone possesses the secret of punishments which reinstate the

offender, and it is not the least among the evidences of the divinity of her institution.

The most important of the divine penalties with which the Church is armed is confession, voluntary confession. And in that penalty there is justice; for if you have had the courage to commit the fault, why not do so before the world? If you have not been afraid of doing evil before your own heart, why not do so before the whole human family? And yet this justice is merciful; for it is not to the world, to a severe and corrupt world, that you are directed to avow your faults, but to a single man, in the most profound secret; to a man humble and meek, subject to temptation like his brethren, but purified by victory; and that avowal humbles without dishonoring you, touches rather than strikes you, reconciles you to yourself and to God: to yourself by the good which you feel living in your heart, to God by the pardon which he grants to you. When Protestants abolished confession, when they sent men to confess to God, what did they do? They only left the soul alone with sin, and drove away mercy by the fear of justice. And when, gentlemen, by a better instinct, you occupy yourselves about penitentiary systems, are you not upon the traces of Jesus Christ and his Church? Do you not seek to transform public vengeance into expiation, so that the guilty might leave your hands punished but saved, wounded by shame and grief but brought back by them to the sense and honor of virtue? It is your object, and one of your most cherished desires, one also most worthy of respect; why, then, do you despise the mystery of expiation in the Church? Why do you not perceive that the work accomplished by her is the very one which it is your ambition to realize? For you are as yet only making experiments, and what experiments they are! You may build very ingenious prisons, you may stifle a man well between four walls, you may impose upon him



many privations which you do not consider to be tortures because they do not shed blood ; but, whatever you may do, you will always dishonor man, and you will find the road to his heart only to pour into it more deeply the poison of despair. Yes, penitence is more needed than penalties ; expiation rather than repression ; rehabilitation rather than death. Yes, but you cannot effect this. Think that this is accomplished ; let men come to the feet of the priest, and you will do more than with your chains, your executioners and your dreams. Besides, what crimes do you extinguish with all this penal preparation ? Murder, theft, violence. But there exists an evil which pierces men's hearts, which gnaws the peace of families, which corrupts nations, and delivers them over, bound hand and foot, to the first conqueror who comes. Does not this evil escape from you ? We, with our voluntary confession, reach all public as well as secret crimes ; we reach them in the thought that prepares them, on the throne as well as in the shop of the artizan. See these princes, who are men like ourselves, more men than we, and on that account more to be pitied. They have their vices surrounded with guards and honors ; truth does not reach them even when men are able to insult them, for insult teaches nothing. Stand by a moment ; behold a poor priest, a Capuchin, whose name is unknown ; he ascends the superb stairs, he enters, he penetrates even where confidential friends are not admitted ; he sits, and the prince, kneeling, says to him, "*Confiteor tibi Pater.*" And to whom does he say that ? It is not to a man, but to the whole of humanity. It is the whole human kind which seizes and compresses him, which says to him, "Sire, you have sinned, you are not worthy to draw near to God."

If some one had said to Augustus, whilst he was walking in his gardens with Horace or Mecænas, "There is a man below with a staff and wallet, who says he is sent

from God to hear the confession of your faults ;” would he not have looked upon him as a madman ? And yet, gentlemen, that folly has prevailed ! And observe, I pray you, that, on all occasions, in Christianity we find nothing but follies ; and we justify these follies before you—you, the *élite* of this age—and you listen to them and exclaim, “ Nevertheless it is grand !”

I shall not stop, gentlemen, to examine the other penalties which the Church inflicts in the conscience, such as prayer, alms-giving, privations. We should have the same remarks to make about them as about voluntary confession ; a mixture of justice and mercy, they have all for their object the destruction of the root of pride and concupiscence which is within us. I pass, then, to the penalties of the external jurisdiction, which reduce themselves to excommunication, that is to say, to the withdrawal, more or less complete, of the spiritual blessings of which the Church disposes, to partial or total retrenchment from her communion. This penalty is also of divine right, that is to say, established by Jesus Christ, who said to his disciples : “ *If thy brother offend thee, go and reprove him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee thou shalt gain thy brother ; but if he will not hear thee take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand, and if he will not hear them, tell it to the Church. And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.*”<sup>1</sup> This penalty, gentlemen, is at once just and merciful ; just, because every community rests upon reciprocal engagements, and because the participation of its rights requires the participation of its duties ; merciful, because without violence, and by merely accepting the dispositions of the guilty himself, it is capable of determining the return of the soul which wanders away by its own will,

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 18, v. 15, and following.

without knowing sufficiently well the abyss into which it is about to fall. Yet as this regards the external jurisdiction, the public connection of the Church with one of her rebellious members, it is evidently rather severe than mild, and it is necessary to consider excommunication not only as a salutary penalty, but also as the exercise of exalted liberty. We have seen that the spiritual action of the Church was free; she was free to spread truth by the word, grace by the sacrifice and the sacraments, virtue by all the practices which are its source and confirmation: in this consists her positive liberty, her liberty of acting. But there is another liberty no less necessary and precious; this negative liberty, the liberty of not acting, without which no sovereignty or even dignity is possible. Now, the Church possesses this liberty by excommunication.

Without the power of excommunication what should we be? Slaves. Whoever has not the liberty of refusing his service is a slave; whoever has the liberty of refusing it is master and lord. Potentates must be made well to understand this; the least among priests has the power to refuse to communicate with them. A Theodosius must be made to understand that he will meet with an Ambrose, who, seeing him coming all covered with blood from Thessalonica, will wait for him on the threshold and say to him: You have soldiers, you have power to force the doors of the temple, but if you enter I shall go out. The liberty of refusing to act is the highest liberty of the courageous man. Woe to him who does not possess it!

At the time of the discussions between St. Thomas of Canterbury and Henry II. of England, the archbishop signed some articles in the palace of the prince contrary to the liberties of the Church; after having done this, he retired, preceded by a deacon who bore the cross. When they reached the ante-chamber the deacon placed the

cross against the wall and made way for the bishop ; and as the bishop asked the reason of this, the deacon replied, "I no longer bear the cross before you, because you have betrayed the Church of God." Thomas à Becket wept, and as soon as he reached his house he retracted that which he had signed. Well, gentlemen, where lies the beauty of this reply : "I no longer carry the cross before you ?" What caused Thomas à Becket, that great man, to weep ? What entitles the deacon to admiration, although his conduct was reprehensible according to the ordinary rules ? It is that his expression was that of a free man, an honorable man, and a Christian ; the expression of a man who refused the wages of iniquity, and who became, by that simple act of abstention, stronger and greater than his lord. His words conveyed this meaning : "You are the archbishop of Canterbury, you have been chancellor of England, the friend of the king ; I am but a poor deacon ; but you have just betrayed the Church : I am too great to bear the cross before you." 'Twas a sublime excommunication.

The more a nation withdraws itself from the faith, the more necessary it becomes for us to retain that Christian pride which caused the Mussulmen to say, when speaking of St. Louis : "We have never seen so proud a Christian." The more the Church is insulted, the more it is requisite for her, like a man of honor, to cleave firmly to her liberty. At Rome, they say, when a man takes away his life by suicide, he is regarded as an alien, and is not refused the ceremonies of Christian burial. This is possible at Rome, where Christianity reigns in all its splendor ; here we cannot do so. It is necessary to be tolerant, but not tolerant to the point of ignominy. And remark well, my friends, that the liberty of not acting is yet stronger than the liberty of acting. A man speaks, men can cut out his tongue ; he lifts his hands towards heaven, they



can cut them down ; he goes to administer the sacraments, they can obstruct his path. But, on the other hand, to force him to act, if he will not and ought not to act, to draw from him the words of absolution or of consecration, what can they do? They will kill him, perhaps. But there is his triumph ; for when a man is dead he can act no longer. Death destroys the liberty of acting, it consecrates that of not acting.

It is unnecessary for us to dwell any longer on the coercive power of the Church, considered in its purely spiritual and internal nature, because nothing is more easy to understand than that no society is without laws, and that he who will not obey the laws of society ought only to blame himself if that society rejects him or imposes upon him conditions for his restoration. But a graver question here presents itself, which has no doubt preoccupied your minds whilst I have spoken to you. You have said to yourselves : The power to bind and loose, kept within purely spiritual limits, without the support of any civil force, is a thing quite natural, which speaks for itself. But has not the Church made use of a material co-action for compelling obedience to her laws? Has she not called in the civil power to the help of the spiritual power? Here lies the difficulty. How can the Church be founded on grace and persuasion if bloody scaffolds are erected to defend her? I am glad, my friends, to be called upon this ground. I will place myself there frankly, without bending history before the Gospel or the Gospel to history.

It is certain that the Church has no right to the material sword. Jesus Christ turned round to his disciples one day when they wished to cause fire to descend from heaven upon a city which had rejected them, and said to them reproachfully : "*You know not of what spirit you are ; the Son of Man came not to destroy souls but to*



*save.*"<sup>1</sup> This spirit, gentlemen, has perpetuated itself in the Church, not only whilst she was persecuted, but also at the time of her triumph. I will not cite to you the words of Tertullian, Origen, St. Cyprian, Lactantius, St. Athanasius, St. Hilary of Poitiers, or St. John Chrysostom; a striking fact will say more. At the end of the fourth century, when two Spanish bishops denounced the Priscillianites to the magistrates, and caused many of them to lose their lives by sentence, the Pope Sirice, who then governed the universal Church, stood up against them; St. Ambrose separated them from his communion; St. Martin repented all his life having only once communicated with them; at last they were condemned in 390 in a council of Milan, and in 401 in a council of Turin. Two centuries after St. Gregory the Great wrote as follows to a patriarch of Constantinople about certain heretics who had been maltreated in a sedition: "It is a new and unheard of predication, that of forcing faith by executions!" A council of Toledo, held in 633, ordered that no person should be forced into a profession of faith, which ought to be embraced voluntarily and by persuasion; and this canon has been inserted in the body of the canon law.

It is, then, certain that the Church, as a Church, does not possess the right of the material sword, that she is founded on persuasion, that faith should not be forced by violence. Notwithstanding, cannot the civil authority, which holds the power of the sword, employ it with vigor, not to obtain faith, which is a fruit of grace and persuasion, but to defend the Church from the attacks of her enemies, and to hinder all external manifestation against the faith? This, gentlemen, is a new point of view under which we must regard the question before us.

In all the ancient communities religion was considered as a fundamental law of the State, and whoever insulted

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, ch. 9, v. 55 and 56.

the religion was punished as a violator of the most sacred laws of the country. Now, had the civil community the right to make religion a fundamental law of the State? Nothing appears to lead to a doubt of this, for the civil community is free to establish any laws which are not unjust, and it does not appear to be unjust to prevent the commission of any external act against the religion unanimously practiced in a country. The greatest legislators of antiquity have been of this opinion, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, in the last chapter of the "Contrat Social," has formally proved that it was the right of the civil community. When Christianity was spreading itself in the world after Jesus Christ, it found that doctrine there existing, which was in part the cause of the long persecution which the Church had to suffer. The Church, protected by God, surmounted that obstacle. The bonds which united religion and the State were broken, and were only renewed later in all their strength in consequence of the dissolution of the Roman empire and the confusion of the barbarian kingdoms. But at last Christianity became by unanimous consent the religion of Europe, and the ancient unity, which made of religion the fundamental law of the State, became re-constituted of itself. Every external act against Christianity was regarded as a revolt against the laws. But mark well, gentlemen, this was a political institution, and not an institution of divine order. The communities which established that rule judged it to be useful to the state of the empire, but the Church could not establish it in virtue of her own right. I am not now examining the merit of this political institution; I only say that it was a political institution, and that, at the very least, it was founded upon the examples of all the nations and all the legislators of antiquity. You have yet the remains of this even among the Protestant States. For instance, the observance of the Sunday forms part of the law

of the State in England and in the United States, and that law is there maintained, by unanimous consent, with a rigor which we should be tempted to accuse, but which is the result of the free wish of the citizens. Nobody is compelled to believe in the necessity of rest on the seventh day as the institution of God, but every one is forced to respect the external observance of it. Such was, then, in the middle ages, the law of European communities. That law has been destroyed by the will of those who made it. Religion is no longer a fundamental law of our country ; but, yet once more, the country had the right to choose that law, to impose it upon itself, and to cause it to be respected.

Granted, you will answer, but the Church was very glad of it : the Church consented to it, the Church co-operated to effect it ; she accepted the benefit of blood ; she joined the spiritual sword to the temporal sword to form with them, over the heads of the people, a vault into which the air of liberty could not enter. Yes, in all conscience I believe that the Church was glad to be associated with the State, to create by their united action an empire in which the distinction of powers would lead but to greater harmony and more profound unity. I believe it, I say, but with the same candor I will tell you why.

Truth is accused of being intolerant, and men speak freely of toleration as an appanage of error. No prejudice is more widely spread ; none is more contradicted by history and by existing facts. If there be an historical dogma, it is that error is persecuting, implacable, infamous, and that always, and to as great and enduring an extent as possible. Error is Antiochus, truth is the Maccabees. "*All those,*" said St. Paul, "*who would live piously in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*"<sup>1</sup> And Jesus Christ, the great holocaust of truth, the supreme victim of error, said him-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy, ch. 3, v. 12.

self to the Jews : “ *Behold I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes ; and some of them you will put to death and crucify ; and some you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city, that upon you may come all the just blood that hath been shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the just even to the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias, whom ye killed between the temple and the altar.* ” <sup>1</sup> This prophecy was soon accomplished not only in Judea but in every part of the world. Who persecuted during the first three centuries of the Christian era ? Was it the Catholics or their enemies ? Who persecuted under the Eastern emperors ? Was it not the Arians, the Donatists, the Iconoclasts ? and you know with what fury and perseverance. The Church up to the time of Charlemagne had incessantly to defend herself against assassinations, tortures, conflagration, prisons, exile, and all that she suffered from error. You should read in St. Augustine of the atrocities committed in Africa by the Donatists—how they organized assassins and incendiaries in bands, mutilating, taking out men’s eyes and filling them with vinegar and hot lime ; and yet St. Augustine unceasingly implored the counts and the tribunes of Africa that the punishment of their crimes should never attack their lives, because these crimes were committed from hatred to the Church. The sixteenth century, with the resurrection of error, witnessed the renewal of these dark dramas ; it saw Protestants break our images, destroy our churches, lay waste our tombs, throw the relics of our fathers to the winds and into the floods, slay our priests and our recluses, and invent for us, in free England, punishments of which the description alone is a cruel punishment. And now, that ideas of toleration appear to be so widely spread, who persecutes in Europe, who imprisons, who banishes, who exiles

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 23, v. 34 and 35.

to Siberia, who forces conversions with subtlety and violence? Is it the Church? Ah! the whole earth knows! Look nearer to yourselves—in the smallest hamlets you will see the Church exposed to a harrassing minority, which deprives her as much as possible of the means of existence, calumniates her, and inevitably loses sight of the sense of justice and injustice as soon as her rights are in question. The combat between error and truth is always that of Cain and Abel. Cain constantly says to his brother: Come, let us descend together into the field of liberty . . . but it is only treasonably to murder him there.

This should not excite our astonishment, gentlemen. What is error to do? Error has neither reason nor the heart, nor history, nor order, nor logic on its side; at each step it meets with invincible monuments, with persuasions which are immovable, with transfigurations of the soul which charm away its disciples. Yet once more, what is error to do? It can only irritate itself, and fall from insanity into homicide. The blood which was upon Cain is its sign; they try now to disguise it. A time will come when the stain of it will no longer be washed or hidden from sight. For us, it is true, tired of an oppression which lasted ten centuries, we accepted with gratitude the union which the city of good men proposed to us; we believed that unity was a benefit to mankind as well as to ourselves. The result of this has been that blood has been shed in our cause, not to make conversions, but by way of reprisal and defence. It may be regretted, for the exercise of a right is even sometimes to be regretted, but it remains always that our nature, the nature of truth, is peaceful, patient, full of tolerance and equity, and that, only after having frequently endured martyrdom, it has not been denied to it to constitute a kingdom in which the temporal sword defended it from the temporal sword. Our raiment is pure, gentlemen; it is white—it is the raiment of truth.



I resume: truth and error contend for the world. The arm of truth is persuasion, that of error is force. Man, by his intelligence, tends towards truth; by his body he tends towards error, which is favorable to the passions. Truth tends, then, to prevail by the intelligence, and error by the corporeal force. If the civil community determines to defend truth, that is to say, to hinder violence from troubling in its attempts at persuasion, it is fulfilling its duty; if it determines to go further and make truth a fundamental law of the State, it is only exercising its right. Remark, my friends, the difference of these two cases: when the civil community only protects truth or the Church against violence, it performs a duty; when it makes of truth its fundamental law, it exercises the right which belongs to all society—the right of freely constituting itself under the yoke of certain laws. And truly, if there be an idea, great, powerful, worthy of man, it is that of making truth the fundamental law. If it were only an Utopia, it would be a beautiful Utopia. But the human passions which respected that state of things in antiquity because the religion was then erroneous, have attacked it energetically in modern times because the religion was all purity and holiness and truth. The passions have been victorious; the civil community, widely divided, rests now upon a totally opposite principle—the full and entire liberty of all religions. May this liberty, at least, not be a vain word, and may the Church once obtain from error the peaceful and full exercise of her spiritual rights, that is to say, of the right of persuading mankind! This is our brightest hope and our most cherished desire.

OF THE  
DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH IN GENERAL;  
OF ITS NATURE AND ITS SOURCES.



## EIGHTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH IN GENERAL, OF ITS  
MATTER AND FORM.

MY LORD,<sup>1</sup>

GENTLEMEN,

TIME has advanced a step, it brings you back again before that pulpit which you have surrounded with so much assiduity. May it have preserved in your memory the truths which we have declared to you! May it, at least, have left existing some traces of them! If God has conferred this grace upon us—upon you, upon myself, upon the Church—you will remember that we exposed to you the necessity of a teaching Church, its distinctive character, its constitution, its moral and infallible authority, its connection with the temporal order, and its coercive power. But that Church thus known to you necessarily possesses a form of doctrine; for if she did not, whence would arise the necessity of her teaching? The doctrine which she possesses is unknown to the world, for if the world possessed it what need would there be of a Church to teach it to the world? The Church, then, has a form of doctrine which is her own, which belongs to her alone, which she possesses to the exclusion of the world, to the exclusion of knowledge, and of all intellectual power which is not herself.

<sup>1</sup> Monseigneur de Quelen, Archbishop of Paris.

But what is that doctrine? What is its matter, its form? What are its sources? These are preliminary questions which it is important to resolve before we pass to the exposition of the doctrine itself. To this we shall consecrate the Conferences of this year, and from to-day we shall ask ourselves what is the matter, and what the form, of the doctrine of the Church; for all doctrine has an object, which we call its matter, and a manner of acting for obtaining that object, which we call its form. Enter with reverence into these grand avenues of truth; the sanctuary will soon appear to you, and already, although at a distance, you feel its presence.

When the Spirit of Darkness determined to tempt the pride of the spirit of man, he sought for an object which might be worthy to seduce man, and he said to him: "*You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*"<sup>1</sup> Such is, in fact, gentlemen, the most elevated, the most supreme object of knowledge; at the foundation of all things, at their beginning, their centre and their end, the first and last question which presents itself is a question of good and evil.

Regard man by the most elevated point of his being, by his intelligence; it is easy to perceive that knowledge is his greatest want. Man has not only, as said Bossuet, two holes in his head for perceiving external things, he has within him I know not what abyss open for the reception of the emanation of truth. The intelligence is a profound depth which truth should fill. It enters there, in fact, but it is imperfect, obscure, contested, a grievous mixture of darkness and light. The Scripture beautifully says: "*The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.*"<sup>2</sup> When the dawn appears upon the world, night vanishes before it: but even when the dawn of truth appears in the intelligence, the dark-

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, ch. 3, v. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Saint John, ch. 1, v. 5.



ness does not vanish, it resists, it desires to divide the dominion. A poet has said :

The sovereign power is not divided.

It is not true ; for the most exalted throne is that of the intelligence, and darkness occupies it with light ; each keeps its sceptre elevated there, and neither is ever more than partially abased. This is a great phenomenon. Would you contemplate the stars ? you subject their motions to the inflexible rules of calculation, you foresee their phases and their return with a precision which appears to govern them ; you plunge into the shoreless ocean of ether, and you bring back from its depths, even to your eye, globes which Nature had removed from your investigation. What a power and how worthy it is of you, men that you are, intellectual beings made in the image of God ! But beyond ether, what is there ? What hand has there distributed, and moves according to immutable laws, so many bodies without liberty ? What is the object of all this spectacle ? At what moment in eternity did the moving world sound its first hour ? At what moment will it sound its last ? Had it a beginning ? Will it have an end ? And then, what is ether ? What is light ? What is substance in itself ? Questions precipitate themselves, and our intelligence appears to us like a ship without masts or sails on unknown waves. From thence it comes that we wander unceasingly between two extremes ; either we see only illusion in things and deny the existence of any thing beyond them, or we suspect the existence of myterious realities behind them. When we abandon ourselves to the first of these ideas, and deny truth, it elevates itself before us with so much power that we cannot, said Pascal, ignore its presence without deluding ourselves. If, on the contrary, we look beyond the appearance and the exterior, we meet with obscurities which seize us with alarm. So that we go from the surface to the bottom, from the bottom to the

surface, discontented at the same time with darkness and with light, but yet more with light than with darkness, because it requires from us sacrifices from the heart.

All the sciences, and all doctrines, tend to establish truth and dissipate errors ; but how is it that in them errors are found by the side of truths and with truths ? Why is it so difficult to distinguish the one from the other ? We spend our lives at this sad weeding and clearing, that is to say, our intelligence is unceasingly occupied in itself, endeavoring to deliver itself from evil and to seize upon good. If there were no evil here all would be sufficiently clear, and there would be no questions : for every question, being a doubt, is an evil. And if there were no good, all would be so much in darkness that men would not ever dream of light ; nor would there be any more questions, for every question is a hope. Now, we pass our lives in agitating questions ; your presence here is a question. Whence comes this ? Who will explain to us this astonishing mixture of good and evil in our minds ? Before we occupy ourselves about any particular science, who will impart to us the general knowledge of truth and error ?

If from the intelligence we descend into the heart of man, it seems that there should be our kingdom, an undivided kingdom. The light of the intelligence is not ourselves, it is a gift which comes to us from without ; but our will is ourselves ; the heart is the centre of our moral liberty. And yet there, also, we find good and evil in the same vase. In the intelligence, good was light and evil darkness ; here, good is virtue, evil is crime. Will you deny that there exists a difference between crime and virtue ? I will enter the nearest school, and open one of the little books which are put into the hands of children of ten years old. I will open it at hazard, at the beginning or at the end, and I will read to you a history of morality. I desire no more in order that the involuntary emotion of your

heart may distinguish for you the difference between crime and virtue.

But if, theoretically, we cannot ignore the existence in the will of a combat between good and evil, can we not establish ourselves in the one or in the other, and put an end to the combat? Can we not establish the reign of virtue in our souls, or the reign of vice? Neither the one nor the other, gentlemen. After many laborious years passed in the exercise of good, the saint discovers still within him the internal revolt; he feels that evil conspires there under a roof which has not ceased to be his own. And, on the other hand, imagine a man who may have passed through all the degrees of crime; heap upon him, in your thoughts, the most terrible actions which you can conceive; see, he sleeps, that man, he believes himself for ever secure from good, he no longer feels remorse nor conscience, he believes so at least! But, some day, as in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, a stone detached from the mountain will shatter the colossus with feet of potter's earth; some day, without apparent cause in that heart despaired of, a tear will form itself; it will ascend through the heart, will pass through channels which God has made, to reach those guilty eyes, and will flow down his cheeks; that single tear will have revealed truth to him, and have rendered honor to good. And whilst the vulgar think yet to see upon his humiliated forehead the signs of reprobation, already the heavens have bowed down. God the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, the spotless Virgin, all the angels, all the saints, and all the choirs of heaven, all are come to see a sinner who repenteth, and at whose salvation they rejoice more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.

So there is neither peace in crime nor perfect peace in virtue. Look into your souls and see if you do not find there that terrible struggle between good and evil. Search

well ; you are powerless to turn the balance within yourself. Each hour combats each hour ; each minute combats each minute ; each thought combats each thought. The image which I trace, say, is it not you ? Have I spoken falsely ?

No, I have not spoken falsely. But after these uncertainties of the intelligence and of the heart, shall I be able to find at least some consistency in the rest ? It appears that God has performed a miracle that it should not be so. Our incorruptible soul God has united to a body, as if we ought not to be alone on any side ; he has united it to a body which dies daily, and struggles against its immortal life. And that which is terrible is, that death must triumph ; at the end it will be victorious, at least externally ; for, for us Christians, the moment of death is the triumph of the soul and of immortality. At that supreme moment the question of good and evil reproduces itself more strongly, more imperatively, than ever. But, at least, beyond that moment, is it finished ? Great God ! is it finished ?

Beyond—No, it is not finished.

Hitherto, we have regarded but a passing spectacle ; it is a combat which has its intervals of repose, it is a battlefield upon which the sun rises and sets. But after that moment in which it would appear that the elements of good and evil should separate, ah ! I perceive the abyss which widens itself. It seems only to begin. I see the eternal duration of being and the eternal duration of nothingness, an eternal life and an eternal death. They will throw, as Pascal said, a little dust upon your head, and there will be an end of you. Forever the worms of the sepulchre attend you, or forever a glorious transformation. I speak now as a philosopher, for, as a Christian, I know that all will exist eternally ; but, in Christainity itself, the final order is composed of an eternal life and



death, because there is a life which is death. And thus, whether we think as Christians or as philosophers, we still perceive, beyond the tomb, good and evil without limits. Such is man !

If we turn our eyes toward society we again find the same divisions. At least, in man, the intelligence, the will, the existence, had only to struggle with themselves. In society intelligent beings combat intelligent beings, will combats will, empires destroy empires ; generations appear to extinguish themselves in space. And all this is accomplished not only for things present, but for things eternal. Some desire that the great object should be to guide nations to eternity, others regard this object with hatred. Thus society, which is instituted for peace, in order that each might have his share of air, of sun, and of life, to prevent oppression, to unite us as in one bond, to enable us to gain present and future good—this society is but a state of desolation, of irremediable division.

And, strange to say ! since the appearance of Christianity in the world, since the existence of the Church, this division is increased : the children of darkness and those of light have pursued each other with a vehemence of hatred before unknown. In Paganism there was at least a kind of harmony : they respected the same altars, the philosophers did not insult the faith of the more humble people. Those great and good geniuses, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, said that it was necessary to do what the people did, instead of throwing discredit on their belief, and imposing doctrines upon them which they did not understand. But we, Christians, when we had holy altars, a pure gospel, a clergy faithful to its duties, when we had an overflowing of divine knowledge and charity, it was at that moment that conspirations were formed against the altars, it was then that the struggle commenced between the empire and the



priesthood which, in time, produced the anarchy which you behold.

As to nature, it is so powerful that it confounds us. If one of you remain here, and another transport himself to the opposite extreme of the earth's diameter, and both regard the same star, the lines which leave the eyes of the two spectators, so widely separated, to meet at the star will form only one single line. So that, beneath these distances from the sky there is only a distance of three thousand leagues. Well! this nature, so powerful and so rich, how poor has it been for us! Have we all enough light, and air, and heat? There are millions of stars which could impart to us that warmth which we want; there are hands in this city which have not felt it during five months. What prodigality and what avarice!

See then man, society, and nature. Everywhere we have found this question of good and evil repeated. And now I ask it of you: Have you the knowledge of good and evil? Has the world the knowledge of good and evil? Is that ancient promise of the serpent accomplished: "*You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil?*" Do you possess the secret of truth and error, of life and death, of crime and virtue, of the establishment and the ruin of empires, of eternal life and death? Have you attained to it? If any one possess it I adjure him to stand up and make it known to us.

Think of this: men only know a thing in proportion as they know its cause, its nature, and its end; that is to say, in proportion as they know from whence it comes, what it is, and to what it tends. Now, does the world of itself know the cause, the nature and end of good and evil? If I interrogate it upon that mysterious cause which produces so cruel an opposition between the various elements of our existence, some will answer me by pantheism, others by dualism, others by deism. If I ask what is the nature of good and evil, some will answer me, that of itself it is with-

out distinction, that there is neither just nor unjust, nor good nor evil, in an absolute manner ; that that which we call good is that which is beneficial to us, and evil that which is hurtful to us ; that in this manner the same thing may be good or evil relatively to different persons. Others think that before the establishment of human communities there existed neither good nor evil, but that good and evil have since resulted from positive laws. Again, some, whilst recognizing the distinction in themselves between good and evil, call that good which others call evil, and reciprocally. In fine, if I desire to know what will be the end of this terrible struggle, if I think of the destinies of man thus beaten about by an incomprehensible tempest, it is then that the ignorance and confusion of the ideas of the world are clearly shown. A man is born : will he be happy or miserable, good or bad ? The world does not know. An empire is founded : how long will it endure, what will be the various chances of its duration ? The world does not know. A war commences : who will be victorious, who will be vanquished ? The world does not know. A swallow perches upon a roof : where is it going ? The world does not know ? A leaf falls : where does it go ? The world does not know. The world does not know the destiny of a single hair, how should it know the destiny of mankind ?

Oh ! ourselves : let us each look into ourselves, recall to our thoughts the amazing mystery of our life. How do we stand with regard to truth and error ? How many things have we believed true which we now believe to be false, how many false which we now believe true ! And who will tell us what our intelligence will be to-morrow ? And whence comes it that we might be on the right hand or on the left ? And our existence, what is its history since Adam ? What were our fathers ? Where and how shall we die ?—perhaps this evening or to-morrow—we

know not. And our heart ! Ah ! here, above all, the consideration of ourselves become grievous, and the abyss of good and evil appears to us in all its length and breadth and depth. What a wonderful mixture of good and bad actions, of odious and sublime thoughts, of devotedness and of selfishness ! Are we angels or demons ? And what a marvellous chaos is also the society in which we are born ! The sound of tempests surrounded our cradle ; we have passed through a thousand contradictory opinions. Some say that everything is perishing, others that all is rising into life ; some that we are entering upon a new future, others that we are only repeating sad and ancient tragedies. And in fine, to crown all, have we chosen our part with reference to our eternal destiny ? Young men of this age, do you know where you will be in that of the immutable and the infinite ? Look at these walls : what profound faith built them ! And you are full of doubt ! And yet I am speaking to reasonable beings, to the kings of creation, the masterpiece of nature, and nothing is comparable to their grandeur but their ignorance of themselves—but the impenetrable mystery in which they are plunged. They know everything excepting what they are !

Well ! I bring you good tidings : this knowledge, which the world does not possess, exists. It exists, for how could the Author of things leave his creature in such unnatural ignorance and uncertainty ? It exists in the world, although it comes not from the world ; the Church, that authority without equal, of which you have seen the design, is the eternal depositary of it. Her doctrine is the doctrine of destinies, the doctrine of good and evil ; she teaches us that there is a God, author of all good ; a haughty spirit, voluntarily fallen, who is the source of all evil, visible and invisible ; and, in fine, that man, a free being, capable of good and evil, tends to attach himself

to one or the other of these principles. Such is the matter of the sacred doctrine of the Church, and it can be defined: the knowledge of God who is the sovereign good, and of the demon who is the sovereign evil, in their relations with man, who tends to unite himself eternally either to God by good, or to the demon by evil.

Not only has every doctrine a matter, an object upon which it exercises itself, but it has necessarily a form also, that is to say a manner of attaining its object. Now, man can only attain an object of his thoughts by two means, by means of knowledge or by faith. Knowledge is the revelation of things by evidence and demonstration; faith is the revelation of things by sentiment and testimony. Knowledge addresses itself only to the mind; faith penetrates there through the heart. Knowledge governs nature, and brings us into subjection to itself; faith governs society. For man sees nature, and does not see the hearts of his fellow-creatures.

Now, neither knowledge nor faith, taken in themselves, in their own native force, are sufficient to explain to us the entire mystery of things. A moment arrives in which knowledge becomes blind; there is also a point which faith, I mean natural faith, cannot pass beyond, for want of a solid support upon which it might be permitted to place its foot. Thus, when you go to the sea-shore to witness the departure of a ship which bears away those whom you love, your eye follows her for a long time; and when she escapes from your view, in your thoughts you do not quit that vessel which is no longer visible, you know under what sky she sails, and towards what port. And when thought becomes obscured, when the map falls from your hands, and a long time has elapsed since her departure, when you no longer know what winds toss her or what hidden rocks beset her path, your soul follows her by an effort of divination, even to the moment when all fails together, and you

fall into reverie and dream, which is the extreme term of our faculty of knowing and feeling. It is in this way that knowledge and faith, one after the other, become exhausted in the purely human contemplation of the secrets of the universe. Knowledge affirms to us the existence of the infinite and the eternal ; it signalizes them beyond all visible existences ; it sees the gates of their abode, it knocks there, but does not pass through them. Will man stop? Ah! undeceive yourselves! Columbus, the Genoese, had in his thoughts discovered a world. In vain men told him that it was inaccessible; in vain were obstacles multiplied before his perseverance: he did not cease to pursue it, even until he had touched it with his hands. Thus, beyond visible things the world of the infinite rises up; it is unknown, but it is discovered, and man will never abandon it. He will ask any one who appears to him to come from on high: Do you bring tidings of the infinite? He will pursue this by the aspiration of sentiment; he will accept the obscure and profound testimony of it; he will escape from rationalism by mysticism.

Rationalism, the extreme effort of reasoning; mysticism, the extreme effort of sentiment—enemies rather than rivals, insulting each other rather than aiding and enlightening each other?

What is it, says rationalism, to believe when you do not perceive? How are we to arrive at that which does not fall under the investigation of our minds? By the testimony of the heart, you answer; but by whatever name you distinguish your desires and your dreams, are they anything else than desires and dreams?

Mysticism rears its head and replies in its turn: The infinite is mathematically established; it exists; and you think to imprison me in the finite, as in an island like St. Helena, surrounded by the ocean? I, who know that I am but a point of which the infinite is the circumference,



I remain captive in my solitude and my nothingness! It is true I have neither chart nor compass to direct me with any certainty towards these distant shores; the way will only be longer, more difficult, more strewn with shoals and rocks. And beware yourselves. In desiring to draw your conclusions only by absolute reasoning, you do so like me by the infinite; you decide without seeing. For either the infinite is all for us, or it is nothing; the one or the other. Now, by what right can you affirm either that it is all or that it is nothing, you who do not perceive it? You decide notwithstanding; you say yes or no; you are mystics. Do you say that you remain in doubt? But do you know well what doubt is? It is the declaration of the possibility of yes or no; for if the yes and no were not both possible you could not doubt. You declare, then, the possibility of the one and that of the other, in the matter on which you want enlightenment; you are doubly mystic.

See, then, these two powers in open contest; neither the one nor the other can be victorious. Rationalism has destroyed mankind by doubt, which appears to be its natural limit; mysticism has led mankind to superstition. Rationalism reigned twice over the ancient world—in the times of Pericles and of Augustus—and twice it confounded the human mind. Its reappearance in Europe, during three centuries, has produced the same result. As to mysticism, its history is less striking, and it was natural that it should be so. Some men, prepared in silence and contemplation, produced from their inward solitude dogmatic affirmations upon God, the soul, the future; they slowly initiated a few disciples into their mysterious speculations, and these doctrines, favored by obscurity, but at the same time incapable of ardent and communicative proselytism, ended either by gradually exhausting themselves or by failing in any attempt at public existence.

You have seen mysticism within a few years making a remarkable attempt in this capital. Upon the ruins which rationalism had heaped up around us a few men of intelligence met, who felt the want of turning themselves towards faith. But instead of looking to the holy cross, around which the throng of true believers collect themselves, they desired to soar by their own power in the region of mysteries; and bold in the desire to edify, as they had been in their rage to destroy, they had the rash courage to set up mysticism in the midst of the capital of France. They did not know that rationalism could do its work in broad day, because it requires but an energetic blow to overturn a thing; but that mysticism, an aspiration despoiled of unity, and consequently incapable of founding a great and enduring work, requires shade, silence, and solitude, in order to exercise its power in the heart of man.

In short, gentlemen, man was of himself powerless before the problem of his nature and of his destinies. His knowledge, founded upon too short an evidence, his faith upon too uncertain a sentiment, were not sufficient to the work which he had taken in hand: the primitive tempter deceived him when he said: "*You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*" He erred in believing that the two terms which constitute the universal mystery, namely, the finite and the infinite, man and God, could be united without a mediator, without a reconciliation, in which proportion and reciprocity were combined. That was impossible. Rationalism and mysticism were but the efforts of the finite to become by itself master of the infinite. It is true, it employed the two powers destined to produce that effect—evidence and sentiment, knowledge and faith—two admirable powers for co-operating with God, but insufficient for operating of themselves. It was necessary that the infinite should render testimony of itself to each of them. This it did on the day of the creation; this it has not ceased

to do during the whole course of ages ; this it did again in a more perfect manner by Jesus Christ—God and man together—reuniting in himself the two extremities of being, unique and universal mediator, means of our knowledge, object of our faith, without whom all remains inexplicable and hidden. “*I am come into the world,*” said he to Pilate, the representative of rationalism and mysticism, “*I am come into the world to bear witness to truth.*”<sup>1</sup> It is this striking and profound testimony which has changed all. The eternal Word was made flesh and came among us. Under one of his forms he was endowed with the clearest scientific visibility, that he might be known by evidence ; under another form he remains veiled, that, being an object of faith, he might also be the object of a delicate and devoted sentiment, but of a sentiment the full assurance of which was as great as the ardor.

Catholic doctrine has, then, a double form, the form of knowledge and that of faith. It is neither an absolute science nor a simple faith ; it perceives and it does not perceive ; it demonstrates and submits itself ; it is light and shade, like that miraculous cloud which gave light to the children of Israel whilst it blinded their enemies. Do you ask of it accomplished facts ? it will give you the greatest events which the world has seen. Do you ask of it principles ? it will lay down principles which will penetrate into the most profound depths of the understanding, and lay open their wide tracks. Do you ask of it sentiments ? it will fill your exhausted heart. Do you ask of it signs of antiquity ? it possesses them. The force of novelty ? it has risen before you and will astonish you by its youth. But enlightened, touched, enraptured by it, would you draw away the veil which hides from you a part of its majesty ? it will cast you to the earth, saying to you : Adore and be silent !

<sup>1</sup> Saint John, ch. 18, v. 37.

## NINTH CONFERENCE.

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### OF TRADITION.

MY LORD,  
GENTLEMEN,

YOU have seen that the doctrine of the Church has for its object the mystery of good and evil, and that, considered in its form, or its manner of attaining its object, it is at once a science and a faith. A science, because the testimony of God, upon which it is founded, is from the domain of evidence and demonstration; a faith, because this same testimony operates upon things profoundly hidden from the perception of our minds. I must now, gentlemen, to follow logical order, make known to you the sources of the doctrine of the Church. If that doctrine were only a science it would have no other sources than nature and reason; but, joining to the conditions and prerogatives of science the conditions and prerogatives of faith, it also and principally derives its data from tradition and Scripture, the depositaries of divine testimony. I shall, then, have to speak to you successively of tradition, of Scripture, of reason, and of nature, as sources of the doctrine of the Church; after which we will examine more profoundly the essence of faith, and the means of acquiring it.

I will commence to-day with tradition. With regard

to God, for whom there is neither past nor future, because he exists by an unique and eternal action, tradition does not exist; but of all that which is subject to succession, of all that which exists in time, tradition is a necessary element. For tradition is not only the recollection of things which are no more, it is the continuity of the past in the future. Without tradition life would be but a succession of moments without connection, a drop of water falling after another drop of water; it would be without unity, and even man would be unable to assure himself of the identity of his existence. In fact, if, from the hour of his birth, moments did not link themselves to moments, thought to thought—if, when rising in the morning, an unknown power did not reunite for him the moment which followed his waking with that which preceded his falling asleep—his existence would be broken, and, whatever he might do, he would never be able to connect the past of yesterday with the present of to-day. There exists, then, in time, a power which forms the chain, the unity; and that power is tradition. Tradition is the connection of the present with the past. It is by tradition that, joining together hours, years, and centuries, you know yourself as a single and enduring being, notwithstanding the rapidity of the billows which bear you along; it is tradition which gathers generations together into one single moral existence which you call family, families into one single body which you call a people, nations into one great whole which you call mankind. Without tradition, which maintains unity in succession, the universe would be but an eternal abortion; it would perish at each instant of its incessant creation.

However, I have not yet shown all that which tradition comprises: it is not only the tie which unites the present to the past, it is also that which unites the past to the future. There is, in fact, a sovereign law of things, namely,



that the end is proportionate to the beginning; from whence it follows that the knowledge of the origin infallibly reveals the secret of the end. If it were true that the world had sprung up like a wonderful fungus, which grew up no one knew how, in one night, it might end as it had commenced. But if the creating will has fertilized nothingness—if upon the face of man a divine breath has been wafted—man does not belong to earth, he has higher destinies, and the breath of God which is in him will show itself in his final immortality. The end always answers to the commencement; this belongs to a general law which orders that the effect shall be proportionate to the cause. The notion of cause and effect is the principal element of all human science, and it is a consequence of that notion that effects cannot go beyond causes, that they can only expand in proportion to their origin. The origin is the germ, the power, which has produced you; that which was not in it cannot be in you. You are but the effects. In the power which gave you life is found the reason for which you received it, so that whoever knows your origin knows also your end. But the end no one knows. Call together all the powers of your mind, all the strength of argument, you will not pierce through the impenetrable veil of the future. Which of you can tell me what he will be in a little time? I am not speaking to you of the destinies of nations; I do not ask you to prophesy the duration of empires; I interrogate you about yourselves. I do not talk to you of long years, I speak of the present hour. Which of you can tell me what he will be when I have done speaking? Who knows what changes may be produced in your minds? Who knows how the thought which commences may be completed? Thus, even the future of your thoughts is a mystery in which your thoughts become confounded. But if you cannot contemplate the future face to face, there exists that in which we

can discover it, as a shadow reflected in advance ; it is the past. If we knew the secret of the past we should know also that of the future.

Now tradition reveals the past to us, and consequently it reveals to us also the future. It is the tie which binds the past, the present, and the future together, and is the science of them all. If we possessed the memory of mankind, as we do that of our personal existence, we should know all. But if we have not the memory of mankind does not mankind possess it? Is mankind without memory, without tradition? It is far from being so, gentlemen: the most inattentive glance cast upon the world shows us that the traditional sap flows there in full stream. There is no nation which does not exist through tradition, not only historical traditions, relative to its earthly existence, but through religious traditions relative to its external destiny. To despise this treasure, what is it but to despise life and that which constitutes its connection, its unity, its light, as we have just seen? All doctrine which does not take account of tradition is doctrine without a future, because it is without a past—without any knowledge of the end of things, because it ignores their commencement; it is a statue which would remain standing after its pedestal is overthrown.

Catholic doctrine, on the contrary, gentlemen, has for its principal basis the conservative tradition of the word of God. When God spoke to men, his word passed into time: it was no longer the eternal, infinite, substantial word, the Word itself; it was a divine word, but it had passed into the course of terrestrial things, a word susceptible of decadence, of degradation, of being forgotten, condemned to inhabit the ear of man, to pass by his mouth, and subject from that time to all the chances of our imperfection. Happily, tradition seized upon it as soon as it left the threshold of eternity, and tradition is neither an ear, nor a

mouth; nor an isolated memory, but the ear, the mouth, and the memory of generations united together by tradition itself, and imparting to it an existence superior to the caprices and weakness of individuals. Nevertheless, God would not trust to oral tradition alone, and he sought a means of establishing it by a living, an universal, and an indestructible sign, which should entirely comprehend it and bear it perpetually even to the most distant irradiations of the human race. Symbolical tradition was to add itself to oral tradition by sustaining and confirming it.

Oral tradition declared the mystery of good and evil: that there was a nature supremely perfect, infinite, eternal—God; that this nature, which was of itself all-sufficient by love—by love such as men cannot understand—designed to make our nothingness participate with the infinite; that man rejected this love; that he preferred man—less than man, the dust; and that this degrading concupiscence separated him from God; that by a second act of mercy God resolved to resuscitate love, and, by restoring man, to prepare for him that before which the great work of the creation would retreat into shade; he designed that man, according as he accomplished or neglected the law of reparation, should be eternally united to God, or eternally separated from him. Such were, according to oral tradition, the five terms constituting the mystery of good and evil; the existence of God, the creation of the world and of man by God, the fall of man, his restoration by a great act of divine mercy, and lastly, the final judgment of mankind. In these few words were contained all dogma, all worship, all mortality, all the actual relations of man with God. And that which oral tradition declared, symbolical tradition should repeat at all times and in all places, in order that the obscured or deceived memory of man might be brought back again to truth by an eternal, a public, an universal, all-powerful spectacle.

Now, God had resolved from all eternity to save man by the sacrifice of his only Son. In the creation he gave life to man without taking it from himself; in the redemption he designed to take it from himself, to give it to us a second time. I do not stop now to explain to you this deep design of God; the time is not yet arrived for it. I mention it only as a thing which is not strange to you. From your infancy you have been initiated into this mystery of love, and I do not deceive myself in saying that you have enjoyed happy experience of it. God grant that it may still be so! God grant that the light which gladdened your early years may not be extinguished within you as your intelligence is become more capable of appreciating the benefit of it!

God, then, having resolved to save the world by sacrifice, it followed that the sacrifice contained in its essence the five terms which constitute the mystery of good and evil: first, the idea of God, to whom the sacrifice is offered—the idea of God, creator, since the immolated victim is a witness of his supreme dominion over all beings, a dominion which could not have existed without creation; the idea of the fall of man, since the sacrifice offered for all is an universal expiation; the idea of reparation, since it would have been useless to expiate that which is not to be atoned for; in fine, the idea of judgment, because, if man had nothing to fear or to hope for in another life, the fall and restoration would be but idle words. God instituted sacrifice, then, from the beginning, as a representative sign of the mystery of good and evil; he caused the symbolical blood of animals to be shed around the cradle of mankind until the coming of the day when the true Lamb should be immolated. And as every kind of sacrifice supposes three things—the priest, the victim, and the altar—these three things were established from the beginning, in triple testimony of the divine word, all three be-



ing endowed with immortality and universality. Look around you : where is the place in which there are no priests ? where is the place in which there are no victims and no altars ? Everything has changed in the world excepting that. Whilst oral tradition spread itself over all the world with the emigration of the primitive tribes, passing from the lips of the patriarchs to those of their posterity, symbolical tradition, more stable but not less eloquent, raised up, on all the frontiers of the future, its solemn temples. The blood and the word flowed together, and together addressed the same things to wondering and attentive mankind. Each time that oral tradition underwent a movement of renovation by the breath of God, symbolical tradition felt the effects of it. The sacrifice of Abel marks the era of patriarchal tradition ; the sacrifice of Abraham marks the era of Hebrew tradition ; the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the final and consummating sacrifice, marks the era of Christian tradition. The symbol followed the same progress as the word ; as the word became elevated and completed the blood also became more pure and more worthy of being for men the organ of truth.

Such is, gentlemen, the nature of tradition, and such its history. Tradition is the connection of the present with the past, of the past with the future ; it is the principle of identity and continuity which forms persons, families, nations, and mankind. It flows in the human race by three great streams which are clearly perceptible—the Christian, the Hebrew, and the patriarchal or primitive. In all these three it is oral and symbolical, and, whether as oral or symbolical, it speaks of God, the creation, the fall, reparation, and judgment. It remains now to be seen what is its rational value, or, if you prefer it, what we may conclude from it in favor of the doctrine of the Church. I shall leave oral tradition, the unity and force of which it will require too much time to demon-



strate, and shall confine my attention to symbolical tradition.

Tradition, gentlemen, possesses the value of a fact. A fact is the scientific element *par excellence*, above all when it is connected with another, when many together form a series, and it is impossible to perceive in them anything but the result of chance. A fact is something which the intelligence does not produce, which resists it, which it may deny, but which subsists notwithstanding its negation. A sophist would prove to you that you do not exist; you laugh at his reasoning by continuing to exist. Another would maintain before you that the antipodes are an absurd chimera; you are contented to know that they exist, because they have been seen. There was a time when, perhaps, more account was taken of reasoning than of facts in the explanation of nature and of society; but that spirit has yielded, at least in physical sciences. Bacon has appeared, who said to his age: You have wasted time enough in speculations without reality; study nature no longer in your ideas, but in itself; examine, handle, prove, see that which is. We say the same thing to you, gentlemen: see that which is, not in a man, not in a family, not in a nation, but in mankind. See the fact of sacrifice and the traditional ideas which are necessarily included in it, for sacrifice is not a material act, a stone upon which a beast is killed by a man dressed in a singular costume. Sacrifice is evidently a moral, religious, and dogmatic act; it has a signification to which mankind adheres, and, in fact, mankind has everewhere offered it to God as a recognition of his sovereignty, as an expiation, a hope, a means of salvation. The fact is inseparable from the dogma, and the dogma which is contained in it has consequently the scientific value of a fact; men can no more despise it than they can the movement of the earth around the sun.

In the second place, sacrifice possesses the value of an universal and a perpetual fact, that is to say, of a law. You who study sciences, by what do you recognize a law? by these two signs, the universality of the facts, and their constant reproduction. When you have anywhere recognized these two characters, when you have observed a constant and an universal phenomenon, you say decisively: There is a law. Well, now, you are pressed between these two extremities: either you must deny the universality and the perpetuity of sacrifice, or you must declare that an universal and perpetual fact is not the sign of a law. Do you deny that such is the sign of a law? You cannot, without ruining knowledge. Do you deny the universality and perpetuity of sacrifice? Why, sacrifice is made in the Christian community, which is everywhere, in the Hebrew community, which is everywhere, and in human communities, which are without the pale of these two, before and after Jesus Christ. How can you deny that threefold universality, and that threefold perpetuity? They say that in America, sometimes, by a magnificent illusion, three suns appear together in the firmament. Do you deny the sun in presence of its triple apparition? Sacrifice is a fact, the universality and perpetuity of which are so much the more remarkable as it is maintained in spite of the religious revolutions which have to the greatest extent changed dogma, worship, and morals. If men had always respected religion they might have supposed that a sort of sacerdotal conspiracy existed to maintain it. But they have not respected it; they have perverted it in a thousand forms; they have grouped a thousand fables around sacrifice, and yet it has remained intact. Nothing has been able to destroy the priest, the victim, and the altar.

The priest! Have you ever realized the difficulty of imagining a priest? Have you ever explained to your-

selves, not how it is that there have always been priests, and how there are still so many, but how it is that there is even one? I pity the man who could meditate upon the priesthood without being struck with astonishment at a priest's existence. What, then, is a priest? Is it a man who practices morality, an officer of morals, as he was called in the eighteenth century? But outside the pale of Christianity, where is the morality of the priests? What was the morality of the pontiffs of Greece and Rome? Is a priest a philosopher? Philosophy attacks the priest. Is he a public functionary of a certain kind? If all the sovereigns of Europe, and of the world, were to agree together to make a man a priest, they would only succeed in making a man ridiculous and contemptible. There are, in this city, statesmen, men of genius, poets, orators, artists: I pray them to consult together, and to consecrate a priest. They shall see an example of their production. In the time of the French Revolution one of the chiefs of the Government one day presented himself in a temple dressed in a white robe with a blue girdle, bearing in his hands a vase of flowers which he offered to the Supreme Being, the founder of the Republic. In itself that act was only simple and reasonable: why should not a magistrate, dressed in solemn garments, offer to God one of the most pure and lovely productions of creation, a *bouquet* of flowers? He was nevertheless regarded as a man who had made himself supremely ridiculous. He performed the act of a priest without having received the sacerdotal transformation, without being elevated to the incomprehensible figure of a priest. The priest! The man who exists neither by morality, nor by philosophy, nor by the state, nor by the world! The man whom it is impossible to create, and who, nevertheless, is everywhere and in all times! In fine, what is he? The priest is the man anointed by tradition to shed blood, not like

the soldier, by courage, not like the magistrate, by justice, but like Jesus Christ, by love ; the priest is the man of sacrifice, reconciling heaven and earth every day by it, and by it announcing daily to every soul the primordial verities of life, death, and resurrection. For this reason, a few moments ago, when sacerdotal hands elevated the sacred Host, you, the sons of the eighteenth century, nourished by the lofty ideas of your age, were seized with an involuntary respect, and you inclined your heads by an instinct for which I hope God will bear you in remembrance. Sacrifice or tradition, for they are the same thing, is not, then, simply a fact, but an universal and a perpetual fact, that is to say, a law. And when we say a law, we say a truth, unless it be maintained that the law is of human institution ; this is not the case with regard to sacrifice, as you should conclude from what we have said, and from the remarks which we are about to add.

We must conceive an authority which has been capable of imposing sacrifice upon all nations, in all times, notwithstanding the diversity of ideas and customs, and the course of the revolutions of the human mind, before it can be called a human institution. Now, it is manifest that such an authority does not exist, and that it is impossible. If even at the beginning of the world a legislator, invested with sovereignty over patriarchal tribes, had established the law of sacrifice, it would evidently have perished by the single act of the separation of families, who, detached from the common trunk, each advanced towards its own particular future. This result would have been so much the more certain as the practice of sacrifice could no more have been justified by reason than have been invented by it. What relations exist, in reality, between reason and sacrifice ? What ! The killing of a beast with solemnity is that which reason would have regarded as the highest religious act, as the homage most agreeable to God, as the



means of universal remission! Is it possible? And if, instead of considering symbolical sacrifice, we stop at the real sacrifice, that is to say, the death of the Son of God for the redemption of mankind, how could reason have imagined it—reason, which cannot even comprehend it after it is accomplished? Reason is so foreign to the idea of sacrifice that, wherever it has set itself to work to examine it, it has fallen into the frightful crime of human sacrifices. Yes, gentlemen, it is reason which has offered living men to the Divinity, which has burned and tortured them, which has opened their sides to try to discover there the will of heaven. It is reason which has said to man: Since victims are pleasing to God, it follows that the most excellent are the most acceptable; kill man, then, for man is more precious than animals. This is what reason has produced, when reason has interfered with sacrifices. It has given birth to a horrible crime against God and man, with which it has stained the annals of many nations. And yet it is not the want of reason which invented sacrifices; for the most civilized, as well as the most barbarous, nations have knelt and kneel daily around the sacrificial stone; and, in addition, since the God-man was immolated for mankind, there has sprung up in the world too enlarged a spirit of love, too elevated a purity, too perfect a community, to charge with folly the source from which so great a renovation is diffused upon the world.

Thus sacrifice is neither a production of reason nor of folly, and it is an institution which is predominant in the history and the existence of mankind. Recognize in this the finger of the Divinity, the type of all the superhuman works which are at the same time beyond our strength and our weakness. That which reason cannot produce and that which it cannot condemn, that which is neither reasonable nor unreasonable, is evidently divine. There are but three forms for the existence of things; either



they are higher than man, or within his power, or beneath him. If a thing is not beneath man nor within his comprehension, it comes from a higher power, that is to say, from God.

The divinity of sacrifice once established, and consequently the divinity of tradition of which it is the support, it remains to be seen where is the pure and complete sacrifice, and consequently the tradition without a mixture of error. Now already, gentlemen, you have anticipated me; your minds are fixed upon that privileged tradition you have named the Christian tradition. For it is manifest at the first glance that Christianity alone possesses the real sacrifice, of which the others are but the foreshadowing and the type. What is the blood of he-goats and of heifers to God? What relation can there be between killing an animal and honoring God? But, by the light of the Christian sacrifice, all becomes clear, all becomes explained, dogma, worship, morality. We can conceive all these attributes of God being revealed in that great immolation: his power, his justice, his mercy, his wisdom, his holiness. We can conceive that the victim touched his heart with unspeakable tenderness, and that nothing more sublime could be presented to him. We can conceive that all virtue flows from the wounds of the God-man, and that man may have learned there purity with charity.

I stop here, gentlemen; I have said enough on this subject to enable you to comprehend the nature, the history, and the value of tradition. The impression at least will remain with you that it is time to study Christian facts as well, and with as much right, as those of nature. Pursue the movement of your age; it hoists the banner of facts, and already, by a more conscientious study of history, it has, perhaps without designing to do so, rectified many errors. For the passions are still mixed with its labors; but the passions die away and the

acquired results remain. Attach yourselves, then, to facts, gentlemen, to tradition: leave your individual reason, study the moral as well as the physical universe; the one and the other has its laws, independent of our minds and of our wills. All our glory, all our strength lies in knowing them, and in accepting their yoke with love. And this yoke is easy and light; for the elements of the moral universe, as well as of the physical universe, have been prepared for the final happiness of man.

## TENTH CONFERENCE.

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### OF SCRIPTURE.

MY LORD,  
GENTLEMEN,

TRADITION is contemporary with language. As soon as the word is pronounced, tradition seizes upon it and transmits it to those who have not heard it; but you will easily understand to what chances that word is subject, all-divine though it be, in passing from mouth to mouth. And you have already seen what precautions were taken by Providence against the successive degradation of his word; how he collected together the truths which it contained in sacrifice—a symbol easy to retain, universal also and perpetual; and how he confided this symbol of sacrifice, with the truths which it contained, first to mankind in the persons of the patriarchs, next to a miraculous people, and lastly to the Catholic Church.

But if it were possible that this word was somewhere fixed—that it had remained as firm as brass and as pure as the diamond—do you not conceive how much more the gift of God would have been magnificent? Do you not conceive that the divine testimony would have attained the highest possible certainty? Now the word has been actually fixed by Scripture, and without occupying ourselves with the question as to whether Scripture was a gift

from above or an invention of men, we see that there exists two kinds of it : human and sacred Scripture. I understand by human Scripture that which is considered by men as the expression of the ideas of a man : I understand by sacred Scripture that which is venerated by nations as containing something more than the ideas of a man. It remains to be seen what is the value of that sacred Scripture, and if, amongst those which bear this name, there is one of really divine institution, from which the Catholic Church has the right to derive her teaching as from an infallible source of truth.

There are in the world an innumerable quantity of books, nevertheless there are but six of them which have been venerated by nations as sacred. These are the Kings of China, the Vedas of India, the Zend-Avesta of the Persians, the Koran of the Arabs, the Law of the Jews, and the Gospel. And at first sight I am struck with this rarity of sacred writings. So many legislators have founded cities, so many men of genius have governed the human understanding, and yet all these legislators, all these men of genius, have not been able to cause the existence of more than six sacred books upon earth ! It is, gentlemen, the chief characteristic of the sacred books that they cannot be produced by any human power. In order to be convinced of this, let us ask ourselves : What is a book ?

A man has an idea, or at least, if he has not, he believes that he has. He goes to his desk and he writes four hundred pages upon that idea ; then he seeks a publisher and says to him : Here is a manuscript which, if printed with proper margins, will form a good octavo volume ; how much will you give me for it ? The publisher takes the work, values it, calculates that a thousand copies at a certain sum will produce so much : so much for the printer, so much for the publisher, and so much for the author.

The work is printed and advertised. If it succeeds the edition is sold ; a thousand persons possess that book, and some thousands more borrow it ; so that ten or twelve thousand minds are in communication with the idea of the writer. This is a success which all those who possess talent cannot promise themselves, for even with talent it is possible to write a book which does not succeed. I say this for the consolation of a great number of persons.

But let us leave ephemeral productions, which cannot aspire to the veneration of ages, and speak of books really great. I will only name three, and I think I shall not fail to fulfil my promise in naming Homer, Plato, and Cicero—Homer, the prince of poesy ; Plato, the prince of philosophy ; Cicero, the prince of orators, and, if we had not Bossuet, I should say the eternal prince of eloquence. Well, gentlemen, who among mankind are acquainted with Homer, Plato, and Cicero ? Would you meet in this capital from one end of a street to the other many men who in answer to the question : Do you know Homer ? would not regard you with astonishment. And how would it be outside this capital, among uncivilized nations ? And next, in order to be sacred, it is of but little account that a book be known ; it is also necessary for it to become the foundation of a nation's faith, the rule of its morals, that the people should on rising in the morning fall upon their knees, open that book, incline their heads, make a sacred sign upon their foreheads, and by that book address their prayers to their Creator.

This single reflection already teaches us that sacred writings—the false as well as the true, those which contain the word of God and those which do not—are not ordinary works. Learn by the rare occurrence of the fact the difficulty of imposing a book upon a people. A thousand kinds of worship have been established in the world : there



are only six of them which have produced a book. What, in fact, is a book? It is a tissue of ideas. Now, every idea belongs either to the order of science or of faith; if a book is scientific the people do not understand it, and the learned, who do understand it, only respect it on account of the knowledge which they think they possess, as well as and even to a greater extent than the author; if the book is mystic, in the human sense of the word, that is to say, if it is the expression of an individual faith, of an isolated aspiration towards the infinite, the learned disdain it, and the people no more understand it than the other. A popular book is impossible, how much more so is a sacred book!

Notwithstanding there are sacred books: from whence have they come? who has written them? where lies the secret of their power? A celebrated diplomatist once said: "The highest effort of art is to make men do what they wish to do." I adopt this phrase, and I say: The extreme effort of persuasion is that of making men believe that which they do believe. Do you think that I should possess the gift of causing you to believe in God if the germ of that belief did not exist in the depths of your heart, if there were not in your soul that which Tertullian called *a testimony naturally Christian*? Just as no chemical power can extract from bodies anything but the elements which they contain, so that great alchemy of persuasion can only draw forth in our minds indigenous truths; and if the sacred books have taken possession of the world, it is because the world bears in its bosom sacred traditions of which these books are but the expression more or less pure, more or less corrupted. Every sacred book is a traditional book; it was venerated before it existed, it existed before it appeared. The Koran, which is the last of the sacred writings in the order of time, offers to us a proof of this worthy of our thoughtful attention. Without doubt Ma-

homet relied upon pretended revelations ; however, it is clear to all those who read the Koran that the Abrahamic tradition was the true source of its power. It was in the name of Abraham and the prophets that Mahomet proclaimed the unity of God, that he established his laws and organized his worship ; he did not perform miracles, as he himself said, but he spoke the language of Abraham, he adored that which Abraham adored, he founded that which Abraham had founded. He exclaims on all occasions :

If Mecca is sacred, do you know the cause ?

Ibrahim was born there, and his ashes there repose.

The same traditional character shines upon each page of the Christian and Hebrew books ; we find it also in the Zend-Avesta, the Vedas, and the Kings of the Chinese. Tradition is everywhere the mother of religion ; it precedes and engenders sacred books, as language precedes and engenders scripture ; its existence is rendered immovable in the sacred books, as the existence of the Word is rendered immovable in scripture. A sacred book is a religious tradition which has had strength enough to sign its name. It can be conceived that nothing is more rare, because truth is single, and error necessarily fears light and immutability. How, for instance, should polytheism have been written ? It has not even spoken.

The sacred writings are then traditional ; it is their first character. I add that they are constituent, that is to say, they possess a marvellous power for giving vitality and duration to empires. Strange to say, the most magnificent books of philosophers have not been able to found—I do not say a people—but a small philosophical society ; and the sacred writings, without exception, have founded very great and lasting nations. Thus the Kings founded China ; the Vedas, India ; the Koran, many great races which have acquired dominion over a part of the world ; the Jewish Law, that immortal people scattered everywhere ;

the Gospel, that Christian republic whose civilization extends its sceptre from Europe to America. The Zend-Avesta alone has witnessed the decline of its power by the neighboring progress of the Mahometans, and yet it still numbers faithful worshippers who every morning light the fire of Zoroaster in honor of the divinity. By degrees the communities disappear which have not placed their future on the basis of a sacred scripture; and the religious and social contest, simplifying itself more and more, will soon leave remaining only three or four great families—the Christian, the Mussulman, the Braminical.

If, after having stated the fact, we seek the reason of it; if I ask you why the sacred scriptures are constituent, whilst philosophical writings are not so; it appears to me that you will be led to serious reflections. Look at Plato: exists there more elevated language, a style more grand? How is it that Plato has not been able to constitute, I do not say a nation, but simply a permanent school? How is it that communities totter when tinkers meddle with them, and that the precise moment of their fall is that when men announce to them that mind is emancipated, that the old forms which bound together human activity are broken, that the altar is undermined, and reason is all-powerful? Philosophers! if you speak the truth, how is it that the moment when all the elements of society become more refined and develop themselves, is the moment of its dissolution? You will perhaps say that it is not to be wondered at that the writings reputed sacred have governed nations; that it is easy to subjugate minds when men speak in the name of Heaven, whilst reason alone exercises only a feeble action upon mankind. Be careful! What, then! can it be that falsehood is more powerful to create and maintain empires than truth? What! do I say that it is truth which is to destroy empires, and falsehood which is to found them? An insolent blasphemer,

speaking in the name of God, shall found a durable work, and shall be from his tomb, twenty centuries after his death, the life of a hundred millions of men ; whilst a sage, speaking in the name of unadulterated truth, shall bear along with him the irreparable misery of having destroyed by his doctrine the security and the future of many nations !

I say, gentlemen, it must be answered ; the question is grave, and I will not let it pass—I cannot consent to let it pass. I have shown to you that the nations which possessed sacred writings possessed stronger and more enduring vitality than those which were deprived of them ; that these gradually disappeared from the scene of time ; that soon there will only remain in presence of each other three or four sacred scriptures, animating by their vitality three or four communities, which will outlive all the rest. Why is this ? I add, that human writings, carried to their highest perfection, instead of elevating and strengthening social existence, have shortened its duration and precipitated nations like a drunken man. Why is this ? Whence arises this difference between sacred and human books ?

You will, perhaps, be tempted to turn the objection against me, and say to me : But you, Christian orator, what do you think of this ? Whence comes the constituent strength of the Koran, the Vedas, which you regard as fabulous ? How is it that falsehood is invested with so much authority ? The answer is easy, gentlemen. Without doubt, the books which have been called sacred are not all true and divine books. With the exception of the Christian books, not one is exempt from fraud and error ; but however disfigured tradition may be in them, it breathes still in them, it announces there that man is dependent upon God, governed by his Providence, and that He ought to be honored by an internal and an external worship, which is the basis of all the duties of men to each other. Tradition sustains these books, all-imper-



fect as they are; it communicates to them the weight of time, the weight of heaven, truth, which comes from the source, although it has been polluted on the way.

But, if all the sacred writings are not divine, if only one should be divine, by what sign are we to recognize it? By the signs which we have already pointed out; by the traditional and constituent signs, and, in addition, by the prophetic sign.

What sacred volume bears the traditional character to the same degree as the Christian Bible? It is true that the Koran, the Zend-Avesta, the Vedas, and the Kings, are an accumulation of traditions; but they are traditions without any historical connection, in which nothing is sustained by the succession of things and the manifest relation with all the points of time. The Bible, from the first verse to the last, from the *Fiat lux* to the Apocalypse, is a magnificent concatenation, a slow and continued progress, in which each wave presses forward that which precedes it, and bears along that which follows. Ages, events, doctrines, are interwoven there, from the centre to the circumference, and leave neither space nor confusion in their network without seam. Antiquity and reality shed there an equal perfume. It is a book which grows each day, which grows naturally like a cedar, which has been witness of all that it declares, and which never speaks but with perception of all things, and with the tongue of eternity. It is impossible, even for a child, to confound the Bible with another book reputed sacred, and the distance is so perceptible that it is almost blasphemy to pronounce its name by the side of those which are its imitators.

Its superiority is, if it be possible, still more manifest with regard to its constituent character. Who will venture to compare any community constituted by a sacred book with the Christian community? Look first at China: what has she done? By what deeds has she revealed herself to



the world? Where are the traces of her arms? where the furrows of her ships? where her doctrinal propaganda? Have you ever met the Chinese on the great highways of the world? This people, dead in an active pride, is shut up within itself, and has not even once during three thousand years felt an electric shock of love and of genius. Come nearer, look at India: all the conquerors and all the merchants have been there. She has given gold, pearls, diamonds, ivory, to all who have desired them; she still feeds the ambition of the British people with her luxurious riches; but do you know anything else of her, except her sensuality, equal to her humiliating dependence? There remain the nations into whose hands Mahomet placed the scimitar and Islamism, and they have certainly made illustrious use of the one and of the other. Yet, where are they? After having invaded Europe by its two extremities and conquered our Crusades, as the war became learned we perceive their glory waning; and the success of their arms hiding no longer the wretchedness of their civilization, we look on, not at their decadence, but at their last gasp. Look now to yourselves, gentlemen; contemplate yourselves—you, the sons of the Bible. You are nothing by your territory. Europe is but a plot of ground by the side of Africa and Asia, and yet they are your colors and your flags which I meet with on all the seas, in the islands, and in the ports of the whole world. You are present from one pole to the other by your navigators, your merchants, your soldiers, your missionaries, your consuls. It is you who give peace or war to nations, who bear the destinies of mankind in the folds of your narrow robe. Descend upon the public place, lift up your voice. I hear the old and the new continents in agitation; they ask: Who, then, is in commotion? Who is in commotion? It is you, sons of the Bible! That language which travels so far is yours; it has brethren and

sisters in all the capitals, it gathers together all passions and all devotedness. If a man from the planks of an adventurous bark, who speaks your language and bears your image, reaches some distant shore, it is at once seen that the great human power has appeared there. By the brightness of his look, by his manner of treading the ground, the earth recognizes the Christian, and its savage inhabitant bows his head and exclaims: These are the children of the sun, those whom our traditions promised to us, and for whom we waited.

What activity! What power! What glory! And all that is yourselves; and the Bible has made you what you are. If, then, nations are constituted by reason of the truth contained in their sacred books, and if the Christian nations surpass all the others, as angels surpass all created natures, it follows that the highest degree of truth is contained in the Christian books.

Yet God has willed to add another to these striking marks of the divinity of our Scriptures, one which cannot be imitated even at a distance. As history, science, art legislation, philosophy, as a traditional and constituent power, the Bible, without doubt, is invested with an eminent perfection which no other book has ever possessed. These things, however, are human, so to speak, in this sense, that they surpass the faculties of man only by their degree, and not by their essence. Another character, then, was necessary to the Bible, and God has given it one which belongs only to itself, the prophetic character. God alone sees into the future; he alone penetrates with a glance into the infinite depth of causes, and discovers there the effects which will result from them even to the most remote limits of ages. For us, we do not even know the day of tomorrow; we are but a cause, that cause is ourselves, and it is impossible for us to foresee its nearest effects. If, then, there was a word fixed by Scripture which beforehand re-

vealed not only the destiny of empires, but the destiny of mankind—which foresaw from the commencement the progress of ages—that word and that Scripture must necessarily be divine. Now, what is the Bible but a prophecy which is accomplished before our eyes? And as a prophecy has two terms, the past and the future, see with what care Providence has separated the one from the other, in order that they may not be accused of connivance. He chose a people to be the depositary of the history of the world, that is to say, of the idea of God, of the creation of the world by God, of the fall of man, and of the hope of redemption which was given to him; for, gentlemen, this is the true history of the world, the rest is but a conceit. He made of this people a living monument, which increases and which unceasingly repeats this history, which incorporates itself with it, which lives upon it, which derives all its glory from it, and waits, with a patience of which we are yet the witnesses, for the accomplishment of the redemption promised to its fathers. Do you say to the Jews that they have not hoped for this? they reply to you by their present hope, which twenty centuries have not disturbed. They will show you their Scriptures translated into Greek, and distributed in the world even before Jesus Christ. It is a material fact beyond all criticism. So much for the past. As to the future, that is to say, the accomplishment of that which was written and hoped for so long, the Catholic Church is there to teach you that a great remission has been brought about by a great sacrifice. The Jewish people and the Church! Who will attack these two monuments, which support each other, and so much the more because they are irreconcilable enemies? They are both elements of the prophetic character of the Scriptures: one is the past term, the other the term to come; and, in order that they may not be accused of having conspired together to deceive the world, they reject each other,

so as to remain separated even to the end—to the day when, the final consummation being near, the past and the future will embrace each other to show to the last generations the last accomplishment of the prophecies, which amongst the ancient people, as amongst the new, have announced this kiss of peace.

Time, gentlemen, will never cease to develop the threefold sign of the divinity of our Scriptures—the traditional sign, the constituent sign, and the prophetic sign. As we advance in the future the past will increase, and it will become more impossible for human labors to affect antiquity : all will appear new except the Bible of Christians, and the precocious decay of that which will be new will again attach minds to the immutable throne of tradition. On the other hand, Christianity will be seen achieving the conquest of the earth. After Europe, it has subdued America, and already it presses hard upon all the frontiers of Africa and Asia. Space vanishes before the genius of Christian nations ; and it is you—men of time, princes of human civilization—it is you who are, without knowing it, the pioneers of Providence in this great work. These bridges which you suspend in the air, those mountains which you open before you, the roads on which fire bears you along—you think they are destined to serve your ambition ; you do not know that matter is but the channel in which the spirit flows. The spirit will come when you shall have hollowed out its bed. Thus did the Romans, your predecessors : they employed seven hundred years to bring nations together by their arms, and to furrow the three continents of the old world with their long military roads ; they thought that their legions would eternally pass over them to convey their orders to the universe ; they did not know that they were preparing the triumphal ways of the consul Jesus. O ! you, then—their heirs, who are also as blind as they—you, the Romans of



the second race—continue the work of which you are the instruments ; abridge space, diminish the seas, draw from nature its last secrets, so that the progress of truth may some day be no longer checked by the rivers and the mountains, that it may fly from right to left, and that there may no longer exist a spot where tyranny, protected by isolation, may refuse to it the means of support. How beautiful then will be the feet of those who spread the gospel of peace ! The apostles will praise you ; they will say, whilst passing by, as on the wings of eagles : How powerful and courageous our fathers were ! How fertile was their genius ! How good they have been to us poor missionaries, to enable us to be borne so rapidly to the help of souls ! Blessed be they who have assisted the spirit of God by their own ! May they receive in the other country a portion of those dews of heaven of which they have unconsciously aided the effusion !

And, thanks to the expansion of the doctrine favored by this drawing together of all the divisions of mankind, the prophecies also will approach their last accomplishment. After that, in the fusion of nations, all the various teachings shall have been subjected to the fiery ordeal, and the intermediate religions shall have succumbed : there will only remain, face to face, total truth and total error, Christianity and Atheism, God alone and man alone. Then, no cloud any longer interposing between the two chosen people—between the Jew and the Christian—between the people of the past and the people of the future—they will distinguish each other from the extremities of the world ; they will regard one another steadfastly, and, at this mutual recognition, they will march like two giants to embrace each other. There will, then, be only one flock and one pastor : the past and the future will be but one thing, and this will be the signal that time is at an end, and that the eternal day draws near.



## ELEVENTH CONFERENCE.

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OF REASON.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

TRADITION and Scripture are the two great depositaries of divine testimony, the two principal sources of the doctrine of the Church. Nevertheless, these sources are exterior with regard to man ; it is a light which reaches him from without, and if it penetrated within man without meeting there with a corresponding light it would not be understood, it would shine there in darkness. It is not so, God, having made of man an intelligent creature, gave him a primitive light "*which lighteth every man coming into the world,*" according to the words expressed by the apostle St. John. This light consists in certain fundamental ideas, beyond which we cannot ascend, and without which our intelligence is inactive. Philosophers have much occupied themselves with the question of knowing from whence these ideas come. Some have maintained that they come from the senses ; others that they are innate ; others, again, that they are transmitted to us with the word which produces them, or at least awakens them within us. We shall not discuss any of these sentiments. It suffices for us to state that there exists in the intelligence a certain number of primitive fundamental ideas from which the others are

deduced, and which constitute its reason. If a man have not arrived at a clear and distinct consciousness of these first ideas he is already an intelligent being, but he has not yet attained to the age of reason; from the time that he loses the consciousness of these first ideas, and of the connection which attaches them to their consequences, he falls into the state of unreasonableness or of folly.

Now, as reason comes from God, it should be in accordance with the divine testimony contained in tradition and in Scripture; without this, light would be in contradiction with light, and God with himself. To what point is this accordance effected? To what point does this light which is within us render testimony to the divine testimony itself? This, gentlemen, is the subject of the present Conference.

In the first place, reason renders testimony even to the foundation of the mystery which is manifested to us by tradition and Scripture, namely, the mystery of good and evil. Reason not only has knowledge of it, and affirms the difference between good and evil, but it affirms this difference with the concurrence of another faculty, which is conscience. Reason is but the perception of good; conscience is the sentiment of it. Reason of itself would have been weak against the will, for it perceives only that which is, whilst the will loves that which pleases it. If reason present objects to it worthy of its love, the will would reject them and say to reason: Do that which is pleasing to thyself; as for me, I am free here: I love and hate whom and what I please. And if reason, trying to vanquish by importunity, should return to the charge, the will, wearied by its solicitations, would say: Thou tirest me; thy light is odious to me; I command thee to turn it away from here: close thy eyes, even if there be ten thousand suns there before thee. It is then that conscience comes to the help of reason against the omnipotence of the

will. Conscience does not permit it to enjoy a peaceful sovereignty; conscience proves by remorse that good is not a stranger to it, but a kinsman and a friend; it draws from reason's own store a light which condemns it, a taste which it cannot reject, since that light and that taste are itself. It is thus that the irruption of the passions has never prevailed in the world against the sentiment of goodness and uprightness, because the passions have never had peaceful enjoyment of their shameful gratifications, and, on the contrary, because the good man, in the strongest persecutions and external afflictions, has found in his conscience an unutterable indemnification for these sufferings. Many sophists have lifted themselves up against the distinction of good and evil; they have sometimes deceived reason, they have never been able to deceive conscience.

If human reason once recognize the mystery of good and evil, it will not stop there; it will not be contented with knowing that there exists a difference between good and evil; it has the power to draw forth the consequences of this principle, and to admit all that, without which there would in fact exist no difference between good and evil. Thus the existence of God: for if God be not—if an infinite and perfect reason, an upright and incorruptible will, which is the living law of all intelligent beings, do not exist—nature is but the result of blind mechanism; it has no other legislation than mathematical necessity, and consequently all actions are in themselves indifferent, although they might produce diversified effects. Crime is but a stone which kills the act of virtue, only a stone which wounds no one in falling.

So also the creation of man and of the universe by God: for if finite beings have not God for their author, it follows that they possess life from themselves, or from some other imperfect cause which is neither God nor ourselves. Will you say that we are to ourselves our own cause? In that

case we have no other laws than our own individual will ; all that which we will do is just, all that which we do is good. If the creating cause be neither God nor ourselves, it must, then, be some inferior power, like matter ; and then by what right shall it be said to man : Be perfect ! Ah ! yes ; we can say to man : Be perfect, when we add : As your heavenly Father is perfect. But if this heavenly Father be not—if we have only an earthly and corrupt father—how can we aim at perfection ? If the cause which has produced us is no better than ourselves, we should render homage to it by imitating its baseness. If our origin be matter, how can it be desired that we should do other than roll ourselves in the mire, and say to the worms : You are our brethren and our sisters ? The more we lower ourselves towards the earth, the more we shall venerate the cause from whence we sprung. It is, then, necessary to affirm the dogma of the creation in order to comprehend the distinction between good and evil.

It is necessary also to affirm the primitive fall of man : for no one can deny that our nature is corrupt, and that it unceasingly demands vile things of us. What have we done since our birth but struggle continually against these bad instincts ? Now, remark the consequence of it : If the source of these bad instincts is in the constitution of man as it comes from the hands of God—if our nature is so of itself, and is not fallen—what can we do better than to obey that nature ? If all beings follow their own law—if the stone falls because it is its nature, if the animal eats grass because it is its nature, if the bird flies because it is its nature, if nature has imparted to us gross inclinations—why should we not yield to them ? Have we ever reproached the beasts deprived of reason with that which they do with so much shamelessness before our eyes ? No, because they are thus constituted ; and we even find there a subject of admiration, because they, in their way, fulfil



the disposition of Providence. If, then, our nature is not fallen, all that which it desires is just and holy, crime does not exist. Do you say that it is not necessary to have recourse to the fall, in order to explain the inclinations which urge us to evil, and that moral liberty is sufficient for this? It is this very liberty which I deny! You free—free in all the sense of the word—free for good as for evil! If you possessed moral liberty in its plenitude and in its perfection, the balance would be equal between the good and bad instincts. You would be influenced by each with equal power. I am wrong: you would be happy and secure in good; only it would be possible for you to leave it, and to do so it would be needful for you to make an effort. Now, to which side do we incline? for which side is it necessary for us to make an effort if it is not for that of good? What marvel has it not called for on the part of God to increase our liberty, "*wounded and weakened*," according to the expression of the Council of Trent. The struggle, then, between good and evil,\* which is in the very depths of ourselves, supposes that our constitution is changed—that man has left a state of purity, and has fallen into a state of degradation.

But this degradation should not have been irremediable. For if man, being fallen, had lost all hope of reuniting himself to good—if he were for ever separated from the kingdom of justice, cursed and lost—it follows that for him good would no longer be anything but a chimera, and evil would be his real empire, the sole source of his real enjoyments. Now, it is not so; man, all fallen as he is, practices good with hope and with joy. His fall has not, then, dragged him to the very bottom of the abyss; it is not irremediable; a restoration is not only possible for him, but it has commenced even from the day of his fall, because from that day the consciousness of good has remained to him, and a voluntary effort against evil.



In fine, reason witnesses to the necessity of a supreme discernment between the good and the evil, between those who have followed the degraded inclinations of their being and those who have laboriously re-ascended through its course by a meritorious aspiration towards God. If, in effect, good and evil had no ulterior consequences, and if God did not require us to render an account of it, that impassibility on his part would show that he is insensible to good and to evil, and that insensibility would teach us that there exists no difference worthy of attention between the one and the other. If God ought not to judge us, why should we judge ourselves in our consciences? Why should we reproach ourselves for that for which God will not reproach us? Why displease ourselves if we could not displease God? Whether our lives be covered with opprobrium or invested with holiness, God will take no account of it at the hour of death. He will accept our hearts as they may be; and to the wretch whose hand we would not have touched, he will say: Enter into my eternity, thou art worthy of it; good or evil works are of no account before me.

You see, gentlemen, the distinction of good and evil, proclaimed by human reason, draws along with itself the recognition of the five fundamental dogmas of Christianity: the existence of God, the creation, the fall, the restoration, and the judgment. Therefore, when sophists have desired to deny the distinction of good and evil, what have they done? They have not been bold enough to say to you—a being endowed with reason and with conscience: Thrust a poignard into the bosom of your mother, as Nero did; or surround your parents with every mark of respect and love, it is the same thing. However corrupt we may be, they have never been audacious enough to address this language to us! They have made a circuit, and have attacked the dogmas which are the foundation of

the distinction of good and evil. Some have denied morality in denying God; others, in supposing matter or evil to be co-eternal with God; some others, in showing that the nature of man, being in its condition true, and inciting him to evil more than to good, evil and good were equally lawful and just; these, in supposing that God did not regard the actions of men, and that since he had permitted their hearts to be corrupted up to this point, it was folly in them to seek with their own hands to repair a work about which Providence took so little concern; and, finally, those in denying the avenging and remunerating judgment. And these enemies of moral order can only be effectually answered by the establishment of the dogmas which they endeavored to overthrow.

When, then, divine reason, putting itself into communication with human reason, affirms to it that a God exists, that the world was created by him, that man is fallen from his primitive state, that Providence has labored for his restoration, and that God will judge us according to our works—divine reason, by affirming all these things, says nothing to which human reason does not itself render testimony to a certain degree. They are two stars of different magnitude, which meet together and reunite their shadows and their light. Yes, gentlemen, Christianity is not, perhaps, that which you surmise it to be; it is not a special law given to certain men in a corner of the world, and then spread everywhere by the preaching of the Church. Independently of the fact that the divine testimony is as old as human nature, it must be confessed that Christianity is revealed to every one who comes into this life. It is of Christianity that St. John has said: "*That was the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world; he was in the world and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not; he came unto*

*his own, and his own received him not."*<sup>1</sup> When Christianity knocks at the door of your soul, ah! do not think that it is a stranger who asks you for hospitality. No, it returns to a family which is its own, to a house which it has built; it knows the recess in your heart where it left its traces. Thus, when at a distant period in your lives you find again a friend of your early days, and you conduct him to the house, to the garden, which you have inherited from your fathers, he recognizes it all; he recollects that there you did something together, that there you had each the same thought, that here you exchanged those words which man never forgets, and which he bears even to the tomb. It is still very different with Christianity. Ah! this is the friend of infancy—the first friend! Even before that temporary abode—your body—was fully formed, a germ was sown in your intelligence. The Eternal Wisdom which, from the beginning, reigned in the creation, touched your soul, and with His sacred fingers gently traced there indelible furrows. And when we come for the harvest—we, the friends of the friend, the envoys of the envoy—that which gives us power with you is that we know how to touch the fertile spots of your nature, that we know how to find those traces already immemorial within you, but the secret of which has been confided to us. We say to you: Know again Him whom you have already known; receive Him whom you have already received.

Internal Christianity betrays itself in your acts in spite of yourselves. Every time that you perform a good action—and who can despair of himself so much as to think he will never perform even one?—every time that you perform a good action you affirm the dogmas of Christianity, you are its involuntary apostles. Every time that you give a cup of water to a poor man, even were you

<sup>1</sup> St. John, ch. 1, v. 9, and following.

the most avowed atheist, you affirm that God exists—God the creator of the world and father in the highest heaven—you affirm the guilt of man and his restoration ; you affirm that God is not unmindful of good, that he will judge, and that on the day of his justice that cup of water will be reckoned. Madmen, or rather unfortunate men, you attack Christianity, and you do not see the perpetual contradiction which you are to yourselves ! Each of your good works confesses the existence of good and evil, and you cannot confess the existence of good and evil without confessing the Christian truths, since all other truths flow from them.

No, Christianity is not a doctrine which falls among nations no one knowing how, like those aerolites around which the learned assemble and compose systems. No, this aerolite of Christianity has not fallen unexpectedly from heaven, it was in our conscience. As the magnetic needle turns always towards the pole, however distant it may be, so there is in our heart a magnet which causes it to turn towards the true north—towards God the father, the restorer, the sanctifier.

However, gentlemen, we must not hide it from you, the divine testimony or the word of God has no greater enemy than reason or human wisdom ; and St. Paul expressly declared this when he said : “ *The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.* ”<sup>1</sup> How is this ? How is it that reason, which renders such clear testimony to the mystery of good and evil, is folly in those even who appear to possess it to the highest degree, and who are the sages of the world ? That it is so no one can deny, not only because the Scriptures declare it, but also because the experience of each day proves it. Is it not your reason which protests against the sacred doctrine ? Are they

<sup>1</sup> 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 3, v. 19, 20.



not philosophers and sages who have attacked it during three centuries; as they did at its coming into the world? If, then, it is so, what is the cause of it?

There are two, gentlemen: a moral cause and a logical cause.

Reason, it is true, recognizes the mystery of good and evil and its fundamental dogmas; and if the restoration of man, which is one of its dogmas, were accomplished with the same splendor as the creation, it is probable that human wisdom would more perfectly have recognized the sublimity of it. But it pleased God, who designed to correct the depravity of man, to imprint upon the work of his restoration a sorrowful character, before which his mind and his senses should become lost or humbled. The cross of the Saviour—this is what neither the Jews nor the Gentiles have been able to destroy; neither those who for centuries looked for the Messiah, nor those to whom he was not so clearly foretold. A God made man, suffering and dying—that masterpiece of eternal love has found only opponents among those who have not chosen to humble their pride and sacrifice their senses. They have harassed their reason to find there resources against crucified love. They who constantly talk of devotedness, and of the immolation of self—who honor the soldier who dies for his country; and the philosopher who prefers his ideas to his life—they have said to God: You ought not, you cannot, die for mankind.

Now listen to Saint Paul, with what formidable elevation he speaks of men of this kind: "*Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*"<sup>1</sup> You hear the fool-

<sup>1</sup>1st Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 1, v. 20, 21.



ishness of preaching! Saint Paul does not hide it; he boasts of it before you with divine arrogance. He does not think it worth the trouble to explain this to those who oppose their reason to the Gospel; who, blinded by lust and pride, despise light and love upon the cross. He passes condemnation; he is proud of that folly which has driven the wise, the learned, the princes of the understanding, before itself, and has shown in its triumph the virtue of God. He teaches us thereby that if reason is the natural help to Christianity, it is not the foundation of it, and that it may be turned against Christianity by the revolt of genius; that, then, supernatural missionaries of truth are necessary; that we should appeal fearlessly to that folly which has vanquished the world, and which, even to the end, will be more powerful than the world, "*Because,*" says he, "*that which appeareth foolish of God is wiser than the wisdom of men; and that which appeareth weakness of God is stronger than the strength of men.*"<sup>1</sup>

It is a glory, Christians! of which we ought not to lose the consciousness, that glory of vanquishing the world by weaker resources than their own. At the beginning of this century, on the decline of the pro-consuls, you saw some illustrious layman proclaim Christian truth with a voice which will never be silent, as the blood of the martyrs of France proclaimed it also with a sound which will never die away. And now, when the throng commences again to press around the cross, do you not perceive that the men who have acquired fame begin to desert the post which they tried to defend with us? Do you know the cause of this? It is because God will not permit truth to triumph by human means. When all is fallen in a nation, God sends men of genius to keep error from prescribing the rights of truth. But when truth reappears, when the bil-

<sup>1</sup> 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 1, v. 25.

low which appeared to have receded returns and swells, and when the great divine army marches with a surer step, then the men of genius voluntarily quit the ranks from fear that the deceived future might believe them to be the authors of a movement of which they were but the rewarded servants. How many already have abdicated their glory, and the only glory now possible ! For, gentlemen, I am rejoiced, although by the way, to tell you this mystery : for a thousand years to come there will be no other glories in Europe than Christian glories. And I will also tell you why ; there are two kinds of glory—the glory of destruction and that of edification. The first is that of Attila and of Mirabeau ; the second that of Moses and Charlemagne, and the one succeeds to the other. When, during a century, men shall have been seen besieging the edifice of truth, and creating immortal names from its ruins ; when all shall be fallen—races, institutions, customs, religious faith and public faith ; and when only the shadows which come and go can be recognized on the bare and desolated soil, then, as life appears extinct in smouldering ashes, and it is necessary at least to blow upon them to bring out the fire, then the moment of re-edification, that is to say, the moment of Christian glory, is come.

I said, gentlemen, that there was also a logical cause of the opposition offered by human reason to the divine testimony ; it is, that each man persuades himself that he possesses in himself the plenitude of reason—all human reason. Now, nothing is less true. Each man possesses the first principles which form the foundation of the understanding, and, in addition, the logical law in virtue of which we draw forth the consequences contained in these primordial germs. Up to this point it is truly human reason ; the unalterable depositary of truth, or which at least only becomes deteriorated by that intellectual malady called folly, instantaneously to be recognized, and the last

chastisement of God against pride and sensuality. But the deductions which we draw from these first principles, by the soaring of our own personal activity, no longer infallibly form part of reason ; they are susceptible of errors arising from our education, from our passions, from the strength and weakness of our intelligence, the communities in which we have lived, and, in fine, from a thousand circumstances which vary infinitesimally, and which cause the fact that no one reason is perfectly conformable to another reason, in the totality of that which it affirms and denies. Consequently, gentlemen, every man who protests against the divine testimony opposes to it not really human reason, but reason more or less pure—more or less corrupted. Otherwise, we must say that human reason is in contradiction with itself ; for it is with my reason that I affirm the truth of Christianity or of the divine testimony. It is also with your reason that you deny it ; from whence we see two reasons contradicting each other, and one of them, at least, is not human reason.

Do you know what you do, when, in the name of reason, you give sentence against Christianity ? I will tell you. You have studied some instrumental sciences, some Latin and Greek ; have acquired some notions of natural philosophy and mathematics ; have read fragments of ancient and modern history ; perused with pleasure pleadings, more or less ingenious, against Christianity ; and with this little baggage, borne by your five-and-twenty years, you stand up without fear before Jesus Christ and his Church, to teach them that you put them under the ban of human reason. Do you think that Christianity, which is certainly older than you, has read more, seen more, and lived more with mankind than you have—do you think it would not have as much right to put you under the ban of reason ? And, in fact, the divine testimony has had precisely for its object to raise up

your weakened reason, by delivering you from ignorance and the influence of the passions, for these are the two causes which diminish your reason, which make you draw false or incomplete deductions from the first principles of the understanding. Perhaps you will ask me : Where, then, is human reason to be found, and by what sign are we to recognize one of its judgments ? This, gentlemen, is a grave question, which may, however, be resolved in a few words. Ignorance and the passions being the causes which take from our judgments their true connection with the first principles, it follows that whenever we have sufficient guarantees against ignorance and the passions, we have a right to declare the justice of our decisions. For this reason the Catholic Church, even humanly speaking, is a highest reason which is upon earth, because she is a body in which knowledge and virtue are produced with the greatest lustre, and we are entitled to say that no one reaches the complete age of reason but by his entrance into the Church, and by his adhesion to the divine testimony of which she is the depository. The Christian is a creature elevated to full reason, to "*the age of Christ*," as Saint Paul eloquently said. To this point, human reason is in us in a state of infancy ; it bends to every breeze, it believes everything, and takes its dreams for reality. But having by the Church attained to divine light, it becomes enlightened, strengthened, extended ; it perceives wisdom in that which it thought folly, and folly in that which it thought wisdom. It sees the unity of divine and of human reason, as our eye sees here below the union of the star and of the ray of light.

Henceforth, gentlemen, you will no longer wonder at these two things, in appearance contradictory, namely : that human reason is in accordance with the divine testimony, and that the divine testimony has no greater adversary than human reason. Human reason in its state of

childhood opposes itself to God; in its state of manhood it recognizes and adores him. Attain to this state of manhood, gentlemen, to *the age of Christ*; do not remain even to the tomb like those Greeks, intellectual, but always young, of whom it was said to Solon, when he visited the sanctuaries of Egypt: "O Solon! Solon! you Greeks, you are but children; for you have no knowledge rendered valuable by time!" Even time does not suffice, gentlemen, to render knowledge venerable; virtue alone attains it with the aid of eternity. Aspire to both of them, they are both of your own age; for your age is an age of faith and love.



## TWELFTH CONFERENCE.

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### OF FAITH.

MY LORD,  
GENTLEMEN,

THE greater part of those who assume to themselves the right to judge of Christianity are unacquainted with it. They are ignorant of the facts and ideas upon which it is based. But it is possible to know these; it is possible to possess an exact knowledge of all Christian facts, of all Christian ideas; it is even possible for a man to receive them with good will, to venerate them in his mind, to honor them in his heart, and yet not to be a Christian. For, to be a Christian, it is not enough to know; something more is necessary; we must believe, according to the words written in the first page of the Gospel, "*Jesus Christ gave power to become the sons of God to all those who receive him and who believe in his name.*"<sup>1</sup>

But what, then, is this faith which should be super-added to knowledge? How are we to understand that knowledge is not sufficient, that something more is necessary in order to worship God in spirit and in truth? What can there be higher than knowledge—higher than seeing and knowing? How can the same object be proposed to knowledge and to faith? In a word, what is the nature of faith?

<sup>1</sup> St. John, ch. 1, v. 12.

We said, gentlemen, in commencing the Conferences for this year, that the mystery of good and evil, which is the matter of the doctrine of the Church, had a visible and an invisible side, a bright and an obscure appearance; that on its visible side it was an object of knowledge, on its invisible side an object of faith; we next exposed to you the sources from whence the Catholic Church derives that doctrine with a double character: by endeavoring to lead you to perceive its light rather than its obscurity, that which convinces the mind rather than that which stops its action and demands submission. We must now return to the part which we neglected, and call your attention to the obscurities on the side of which Christianity is an object of faith.

That which is clear, gentlemen, in Christianity, that which is scientifically proved, is the variety of phenomena which it produces—physical, moral, intellectual phenomena of which we already know something, and which we shall study at a later period under other aspects. That which is obscure, that which you have not seen, is the substance which supports these phenomena, and which is manifested by them. Thus tradition, scripture, and reason announce to you the existence of God; but the divine substance, who sees it? Every thing speaks to us of it, nothing raises the veil which covers it; it remains in the hidden recesses of the sanctuary as a statue which men adore, whose presence and action they feel, but as a statue which no look has profaned.

Thus tradition, scripture, and reason announce to you the creation of the world by God; but the creating act, who has seen it? The true difference between the created substance and the uncreated substance, who seizes it? The act of passing from nothingness to being, who beholds it? In like manner many phenomena reveal to you the fall of mankind; but you do not see in the actual sub-

stance of man that original vice which nevertheless betrays itself by so many external effects. So also other phenomena make known to you the restoration of mankind by God ; but you do not discover in the actual substance of man the effect of that restoration. When the regenerating water of baptism flows upon the forehead of the newly-born, you do not see grace, purity, the Holy Ghost descend into that young heart, which knows not even that which is done. They say to him, " Eyes, be open ! ears, hear ! mouth, speak !" And his eyes do not open, his ears do not hear, his mouth remains closed ; the mystery is accomplished in a region inaccessible to our senses and to our minds. And it is so with all Christianity ; it declares truth and it proves it, but without showing us its interior and its foundations.

You understand now, gentlemen, how the same doctrine may be at the same time an act of knowledge and an act of faith ; because its object is at the same time visible in its phenomena and invisible in its substance. The phenomenon leads logically to the affirmation of the substance ; it is connected with the substance, as the effect is connected with the cause. I do not see the cause in the effect, but I draw legitimate conclusions as to the cause from the effect. In like manner I do not see the substance in the phenomenon, but I draw legitimate conclusions as to the substance from the phenomenon. And, consequently, Catholic doctrine possesses the character of a true science under two heads : inasmuch as it proves the truth of religious phenomena, and inasmuch as it establishes their certain connection with a substantial order which remains hidden from us.

But man desires to see beyond phenomena ; he does not halt easily on the frontier of truth ; his understanding being light, all obscurity offends it. The invisible world manifests itself to him in vain by a thousand striking

phenomena, as he cannot represent it to himself and imagine it; he regards it with a kind of defiance and of antipathy; he only approaches it with trembling, like a man who is about to give himself up to the surgeon's knife, who shivers at sight of the preparation by which he is surrounded, and who wants all his courage in order to abandon himself to the hand upon which his salvation depends. This is why the soul remains free before the invisible world; driven towards it on one hand by the phenomena which certify its existence, held back on another hand by the inexorable bandage which hides its particular substance from its investigations. Faith alone places them in steady and constant connection—faith, which Saint Paul calls "*the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things that appear not.*"<sup>1</sup> A profound saying, which shows us that the object of faith is *invisible*, that the invisible is the *substance of things*, and that faith alone gives the *conviction* or the absolute certainty of it, by attaching us in a manner immovable, although free, to the testimony which God renders to us of it. Thus faith is at the same time an act of reason and an act of virtue; an act of reason, because it is based upon the visible phenomena which show forth invisible things—an act of virtue, because, as the phenomena do not bring immediately to our comprehension the mysterious foundations of the things which they reveal to us, an effort of the mind and its consent are necessary before it can give its adhesion to them.

It is probable, gentlemen, that a thought now strikes you, that you say to yourselves: If it be so, why is not all doctrine a mixture of knowledge and of faith, since the object of all doctrine is necessarily phenomenal and substantial, composed of something which appears and of something which does not appear? It is true, gentlemen.

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. 11, v. 1.



I respect your thought and avail myself of it. There is no doctrine in which knowledge and faith do not meet and stand in need of each other, at least to a certain degree; and it is precisely on this account that all things in the world, even the most palpable things, are exposed, to become for the mind subjects of doubt or of negation.

Let us begin with physical sciences. It is not uncommon to hear young and even old doctors say: When I have discovered in the body the place of the soul, I will believe in its existence. We may reply, you believe, then, in bodies, because you have seen them? Well, I announce to you a sad, a lamentable fact, it is that you have never seen them! What have you seen, in effect, in that which you call a body? Certain properties—size, weight, color, form; but the substance, that which is underneath, I tell you that you have not seen it. If you desire a proof of this, independent of all reflection, raise the temperature a few degrees higher, what will these properties—size, weight, color, and form become? All changes, all escapes, like a bubble which vanishes in the air! You grasp only the outside, and you cleave to it as if it were something substantial; but if the conditions undergo only a slight change, if the heat of the atmosphere increases by a few degrees, all is snatched away from you, and you are left alone in your laboratory. And yet you believe in the existence of bodies; you believe in it firmly, and you do well, because in the phenomena you have sufficient reason for so doing. But it is an exercise of faith, not divine faith, since the object is no more divine than the phenomena; it is a natural faith, and so much so, even to the eyes of common-sense, that nothing is more frequent than hearing such expressions as these: I believe, he believes in the existence of bodies.

It is so also in physiological sciences. We study the phenomena of life, we describe them, we compare them;



we see the evil, the remedy, the modifications which it produces, explain the one by the other, and placed in opposition to each other. But do you know the substance of life? For some it is the organization; according to others it is the blood. These think that it is the mind; those confess that they know nothing about it. Knowledge, eager to collect facts, does not trouble itself to seek further; and when we speak to it of substance, it believes that it renders homage to itself by saying, I do not trouble myself about such things, there is nothing positive in them; my domain is in facts. This is just as if it said: My domain is in the surface; I do not go a line further. We believe, then, also in existence, in the same manner as we believe in the body, because we see their external phenomena.

Beyond the existence of the senses is that of the mind: primitive perceptions, acquired ideas, judgments, deductions, principles and consequences, all the things of which we possess within us the consciousness and the certainty. But do you perceive the substance which thinks? Spiritualists call it the soul, and declare that it is a substance totally different from bodies, without form, without color, without weight, without divisibility, an existence which every effort of the imagination has failed to represent to itself. Materialists maintain that the soul is a chimera; and that thought is the very simple result of a certain perfection in the organs of the body; this is proved, they say, among other reasons, by the parallel development of the mind and the physical structure in the ascending order of beings. Therefore nothing is more common than these expressions: such an one believes in the soul, another does not believe in it.

In fine, if we leave particular sciences in order to consider the order of logic, which is the foundation of all knowledge, it will be necessary for you to ascend to first principles, to axioms which you declare indemonstrable, and

so causing propositions which are demonstrable to bear upon propositions which are not demonstrable, and erecting the edifice of reason upon foundations which have none for themselves, which you so proudly call axioms. It is true, you say, that these axioms are so evident that they want no proof, and that it is impossible to ascend beyond them. Gentlemen, truth has no columns of Hercules. On the dial of truth, your hand travels over a certain space ; it goes, for instance, from mid-day to the sixth hour, then, perceiving the shadows, you say, we can go no further. You deceive yourselves ; truth passes beyond that. Your hand then returns on its course, it returns to mid-day, you again say, there is here too much light to make it necessary to pass beyond. You deceive yourselves a second time ; truth passes always ; for truth calls for truth ; if we were permitted to perceive infinite light, we should see that light travels to light, evidence to evidence, and that the infinite encounters, salutes, and embraces the infinite. Knowledge having reached a point at which its impotence stops, it cries out to you : Halt there ! But truth never desires you to halt anywhere. Truth is like a great stream, it descends to the ocean, and the vapors risen from the ocean, ascend again to the source to feed it : so that whether at the source or at the mouth of the stream, it is always the entire ocean which is found there. And we, placed in our small intellectual vessel, we ascend and we descend the course of the stream ; but, on one side, like impassable cataracts, we meet with these axioms which hinder us from ascending nearer to the origin of truth ; on the other we discover the ocean of the infinite, across which we do not dare to follow the consequences of truth. Everywhere and at all times, at the beginning and at the end, the light which dispels the darkness, the darkness which obscures the light, the road and the boundary, knowledge and faith.

See, gentlemen, where I have conducted you even on the ground of logic, which governs all, which is applicable to all, which tests all, even axioms, the foundation of human reason ; I have caused you to recognize an obscure element, and consequently an element of faith. Not that axioms are not of the highest order of evidence, but that evidence does not keep me from seeking something beyond them ; the substantial axiom instead of the logical axiom ; the eternal light instead of the communicated light ; truth by itself instead of truth passed into a mind which may lose it by an accident, by imprudence. This will lead you to perceive that the natural world is united to a superior world, to the divine world ; natural knowledge to divine knowledge ; natural faith to divine faith ; and that the axiom is precisely the point of meeting and of junction of these two orders to which we belong, and which we have neither the right nor the power to separate, if we would be consequent.

When I said to you, in a former Conference, that you were mystic in spite of yourselves, I saw some of you smile, imagining, perhaps, that it was in jest. Now you will be less ready to accuse me of exaggeration ; for you have proof that faith is necessary, an universal element of the human understanding, to whatever object its faculties are applied, and that it is only necessary not to confound faith relative to things of the inferior world with faith relative to things of the superior or divine world. You believe in bodies, you believe in existence, you believe in the soul, you believe in the word of a good man, you believe in axioms ; and, at the same time you possess the science of bodies, of existence, of the soul, and moral and logical science ; you believe and you know with reference to the same object, and on all occasions you express that double position of your intelligence by the incessant repetition of these two words : I believe, I know. Faith and

knowledge are linked together in your minds, as the phenomena and the substance are linked together in existences. And if you will at all hazards to rid yourself of faith, of that faith which resembles an eagle, whose claws would hold you suspended by the hair over an abyss, you would have no resource left but to deny substance, and content yourself with the surface of things. But who will certify to you that beneath that surface there is no hidden support? You deny without having seen; it is still by faith that you free yourselves from faith. And if you take refuge in doubt, what will your knowledge be? The dream of a shadow, as Pindarus says; something similar to those Elysian fields of paganism which had neither breadth, nor depth, nor real light, fields peopled with phantoms of which happiness itself was the foremost.

There remains another difficulty which you might raise against me, let us approach it.

Whence comes it that natural faith, that which recognizes a natural substance behind each natural phenomenon, whence comes it that it is so easily exercised, and that religious faith, that which recognizes a divine substance behind divine phenomena, is, on the contrary, so difficult? On seeing the phenomena of bodies, those of existence, those of the mind, we have no difficulty in believing in the substance which supports them; why is it that before the phenomena of the religious world, we experience so much difficulty in believing in the invisible substance of which they are the revelation?

I might, in the first place, deny that natural faith is so easily acquired; for, beyond perceptible phenomena, upon what is doubt not exercised? What has philosophy been since its origin but a school of contradictory opinions, which has, in all cases, ended more or less by engendering scepticism? Have not men doubted the existence of bodies of the soul, as well as the existence of God and the divin-



ity of Jesus Christ? Have they not doubted mathematics and the first principles of reason? The celebrated physician Barthez was dying. A priest, who had the privilege of approaching him, went to see him on his death-bed; where he found him sad, no longer possessing in his intelligence a single truth which appeared to him certain: "What! M. Barthez," said the priest to him, "do you not see something certain at least in mathematics?" "Mathematics!" answered Barthez, "I see clearly in them a series of consequences perfectly linked together; but I do not know what the base is."<sup>1</sup> The base! You hear, gentlemen! Barthez did not call the phenomena in question, he sought the base! He wanted to grasp it as he did the phenomena; he was discouraged because he was to die without having seen it. Unhappy man, he did not know that death was about to reveal it to him, but too late! For the base of mathematics, like that of all the rest, is the divine essence.

However, gentlemen, I grant you that, for the generality of minds, your observation is just. The generality of minds have no difficulty in recognizing that which is hidden behind the phenomena of nature; why, then, do they doubt so easily the invisible truths which are manifested by religious phenomena? This facility of doubting is not occasioned by religious phenomena being fewer, less striking, less permanent than the others; for they fill the earth with their presence; we run against them at each movement; they harass us even by the perseverance and the boldness of their action. At each moment the world complains that religion menaces and invades everything; kings, republics, philosophers, poets, orators, artists, all the principalities of the earth are busied about it as Holland is busied about the sea in order to form a bulwark against it.

<sup>1</sup> This anecdote is related in the 1st volume of "*L'Essai sur l'Indifférence*," by M. l'Abbe de Lamennais.



No one applies himself to the work of stopping the sun or the ebb and flow of the sea, but a multitude do so to stop the progress of religion. It would be wrong, then, to say that religious phenomena were of rare occurrence or without strength. They are of as much value as, and even of more value than, the others : why is faith, which is their legitimate conclusion, less within the scope of our faculties ?

Do the mysteries keep back our adhesion ? But, gentlemen, whoever admits substance, admits that which is of all things the most mysterious in this world. We cannot figure to ourselves what it is, the senses and the mind teach us nothing about it, and yet we believe that it exists. When you admit that, you admit every imaginable mystery. When I adore the mystery of the Trinity, you ask me if I understand it ; and when you affirm substance, I ask you, in return, if you understand it. Substance, you say, is but a word. Yes, but a necessary, a fundamental, a sacred word, without which nothing can be understood. What other objection can you draw from the phenomenal order, the only one with which you are acquainted, against the substantial order of which you know nothing ? If it were true that no phenomena manifested anything which resembles the Trinity, what should we conclude from it but the dissimilarity of the two regions which occupy our minds ? But it is not even so, and when we shall study the Christian dogmas, you will see that the substantial order is reflected everywhere in the phenomenal order, although with inferior proportions.

The question proposed still remains : Why is divine faith more difficult to exercise than natural faith ?

I shall be tempted, gentlemen, to ask you if you are really sure that it is more difficult to exercise divine faith than natural faith. You live in an age in which religious faith has undergone an evident decline among nations,

and you persuade yourselves that that state of moral wretchedness is the normal state of mankind. It is an error which history does not justify. Man, Aristotle has said it, is a *religious animal*; he has everywhere believed in the Divinity, in his private and public communication with souls and empires, in the efficacy of prayer, of sacrifice and of worship, in a happy or miserable future beyond time; he has believed all that with the greatest ease, with an unshaken constancy, not only when religion humored his passions, but since it has humbled and crushed them, not only under the reign of Venus and Adonis, but under the harsh reign of crucified love. Mankind has never ceased to bear its desires and its tears to the foot of the altar, it has not ceased to extend towards God the hands which implore him, hands which have not implored in vain, and which, in the most illustrious and holy book in the world, have caused God to take the sublime title of *The Desired of Nations*. Men of intelligence have immolated that ancient faith of their ancestors and their children by a parricidal raillery; they have lifted up against it every arm, that of knowledge and that of scorn, that of falsehood and that of eloquence; they have had six thousand years against it: the faith of the people has been the stronger, it lives, it revives, it speaks to you, it commands you, and your presence here is an act of submission to the orders which you have received. Which of you will die in peace, if faith has not pardoned him? Who among you will advance without fear towards eternity, if faith does not anoint his feet for the way? Who among you has anything against faith but his sins?

Do not ask, then, why religious faith is difficult to exercise; but why, at certain epochs, among certain nations, it has undergone a diminution. For, indeed, human nature believes in God as easily as it believes in the existence of bodies; it prays to God as naturally as it lives and breathes.

And, as to you, gentlemen, who are not human nature, and who really experience some difficulty in believing, consider that men believe willingly that which they love, and rarely that which they do not love. To the question of divine faith is united the question of divine virtue; and I judge that it is virtue which makes you afraid of faith.

The word virtue, gentlemen, which I have just uttered, and which reminds me that faith itself is a virtue, teaches me also to solve a remaining doubt which I cannot leave in your minds without refusing you a gleam of light which shines upon all the doctrine of faith.

Why does faith share with knowledge the direction of our minds? Why do not the natural world and the heavenly world appear to us as they are, even to the very depths of their being? Why is there that distinction between the interior and the exterior orders, between the substantial order and the phenomenal? Why, in a word, according to the expression of Pascal, *do we not see the whole of any one thing?* It is, gentlemen, that if we had seen the whole of each thing, of nature and of God, we should have wanted moral liberty; and wanting moral liberty, we should have had neither virtue nor merit, and consequently no glory of the heart before God.

You know the common objection against virtue. Virtue, they say, is a matter of calculation. A man has placed time on one side and eternity on the other, and seeing that eternity is the greater, he has sacrificed time. And the philosophers cry out: Do they not see a rare merit? We perform acts of virtue for nothing, and they require nothing less than eternity for having giving a half-penny to a poor man. Listen to the answer of God. Men believe only in proportion as they love; to believe in eternity, to love good for its own sake, justice for itself, it is necessary to begin by gratuitous love, which is a virtue. When the recompense appears it is faith which shows it forth, and

faith is a free act of the mind, caused by the love of truth and good ; the love of truth and good have preceded the view of the recompense. It is a virtue which first acts, which opens the heart and becomes faith there ; faith reacts in its turn, changes into charity the initial love which produced it ; and thus a marvellous action and reaction commences within man, in which virtue shines forth the first and the last, and in which the reward only appears between, and even then at a distance.

Yes, faith saves the world.

For faith is the condition of liberty, and liberty is the condition of virtue ; and who will ever dare to say that virtue does not save the world ? This is why the precept which the Saviour repeated most often, is the precept of believing : "*Believe only,*"<sup>1</sup> said he ; "*Believe ye that I can do this ?*"<sup>2</sup> "*Unless ye see signs and wonders you will not then believe ?*"<sup>3</sup> "*Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*"<sup>4</sup> That is to say : Blessed are they who have loved good so much, who have so much loved Jesus Christ as to have kissed his feet, without requiring to touch his wounds with their hands, because they have touched them from their hearts ! Listen again : "*All things are possible to him who believeth ; if you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you shall say to this mountain : Remove from hence to yonder place, and it shall remove.*"<sup>5</sup> And this is true to the letter. You want machines to act upon nature, you employ phenomena to produce phenomena, but when men act by substance and upon substance ought not the effects to be grand ? And why should not men remove mountains like straws ? Archimedes required only a lever and a fulcrum to lift up the

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, ch. 8, v. 50.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 9, v. 28.

<sup>3</sup> St. John, ch. 4, v. 48.

<sup>4</sup> St. John, ch. 20, v. 29.

<sup>5</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 17, v. 19.

world. But, in his day, the lever and the fulcrum were not known—they are now ; the lever is faith, the fulcrum is the body of the Lord Jesus. Yes, faith is all-powerful, because faith alone reaches the substance, whilst all the rest belongs to an order purely phenomenal and superficial ; religion is all-powerful also ; because, being the daughter of faith, the organ of faith, the mother of faith, its mission is to cause the substance to prevail over the phenomenon, the base over the surface, the infinite over the finite, the eternal over the transient, the immovable over the unsteady, eternity over time, God over man !



## THIRTEENTH CONFERENCE.

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### OF THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING FAITH.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

EVERY science is acquired by the study of the phenomena which rise out of its object. Consequently, the science of religion is acquired by the study of religious phenomena. But this secret of knowledge is not for us the most important, since to be a Christian it is not only necessary to know, but it is needful, above all, to believe. The great secret, gentlemen, that which you look for, is that you may, after having been tortured so long by the doubts of human knowledge, rest yourselves in the certainty and the felicity of divine faith.

But what must we do in order to believe? What paths are open to us across the obscurities of the things of God? By what way shall we pass into the abysses which are impenetrable? When St. John, from the extremity of his exile in the isle of Patmos, discovered the last mysteries of the future, he saw in the hand of God a book sealed with seven seals, and he heard an angel cry: "Who is worthy to open the book and to break the seals?" And as no one either in heaven, or in earth, or in hell was able to do it, St. John began to weep because no one could open the book and see it; and it was said to him:

"Weep not, behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah has vanquished, the offspring of David, who will open the book and break the seven seals." Faith, gentlemen, is also a book sealed with seven seals; and I shall not err in saying that there are some among you who desire to open it, and who weep because they have not the power to do so. And I also say to them: Weep not, for the Lion of the tribe of Judah has vanquished; and He has brought light into darkness, life into death, He has given us the means of following Him and of walking in His steps.

Faith is possible; it is infinitely more so than knowledge. Knowledge will always appertain to a small number of minds, whilst faith is the universal heritage. However, there are some men who do not possess it, or who have lost it; there are others who seek it, and who say they cannot find it. How is faith to be acquired? How, when men have wandered away from the first simplicity of the heart, are they to return towards God?

Gentlemen, faith is at first an act of intelligence. Intelligence is the faculty of receiving and combining ideas; ideas are the laws, or the eternal affinities of things, as far as they are perceived by the mind. And as things class themselves in two regions, the lower world and the upper world, the natural and the divine world, it follows that there are two kinds of ideas, natural ideas and divine ideas. The adhesion of the intelligence to natural ideas constitutes reason; the adhesion of that same intelligence to divine ideas constitutes faith. Now faith, which is the adhesion to divine ideas, is engendered within us in the same manner as reason, which is the adhesion to natural ideas; so that the theory of reason is also the theory of faith, and the engendering of the one is like the engendering of the other. And when you ask of me, a priest, what are the sources of my faith, I ask of you, in return, you men,

what are the sources of your reason, and I reply to you by your answer.

This is what it is necessary for me to show you. Whatever may be the system to which men attach themselves as to the origin of ideas or first natural principles, it is invariably the case that those ideas or first principles are received into the human intelligence, since the human intelligence does not possess them like God, of himself, by a primitive and eternal power. Reason begins, then, by a passive act. God alone is able to begin by action, and to end in the same manner. Man is passive on rising into reason as he is in coming into life; just as he receives the first breath of life without his concurrence, so he also receives the first germ of reason without co-operation on his part. But this germ alone, even after it is received, does not grow of its own native force; left to itself, it stands in need of external aid to quicken it in the intelligence, and that aid is language. Whoever has not heard language, whether actual language or the factitious and imperfect language of signs, although he may have all the aptitudes of an intelligent being, although he may possess within him the root of ideas, he will never be seen developing his mental faculties. A wild, uncultivated, and barren stock, he will pine away ingloriously between the region of imaginary things which he receives, and the region of ideas which at most he but faintly foresees; his state would be that of the deaf and dumb. In fine, it is necessary that the ideal germs, quickened by language, should attain to a state of invincible perspicuity; for there exists an implacable antipathy between darkness and intelligence, and every idea, as long as it is not understood and made clear, is but a rough outline of the rational edifice.

Such is, gentlemen, the law of the formation of reason; it is also the law of the formation of faith.

Man no more possesses divine ideas of himself than he

does natural ideas, and much less so even; because the distance is greater between him and God than between him and nature. He is, then, passive in the original reception of divine ideas, as he is passive in the primordial reception of natural ideas. He will never be capable of gaining them, or of creating them within himself, if he have not received the benevolent gift of them from God; this gift Christians call grace, that is to say, the gratuitous gift *par excellence*. It is communicated to man in baptism, which is the engendering of the spiritual knowledge of the soul, or, if he has not been able to be baptized, by the other means which Catholic doctrine makes known, and of which we have not to treat at present. Grace, under the point of view which occupies our attention, is an effusion of divine ideas, by means of which the intelligence is placed in communication with the horizon of the upper or divine world. Yet there is only a germ there, and just as the natural ideal seed requires to be quickened or suscitated by human language, so the divine ideal seed requires to be quickened or suscitated by another language, which is that of the Church. In the same way as your mother has spoken to you, the Church, that universal mother, has also spoken to you. In the order of nature, humanity, by the organ of your mother, has deposited within you human common-sense; and in the order of things eternal, God, by the organ of the Church, has deposited within you that which we might call divine common-sense. Thence comes that saying of Saint Paul: "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*"<sup>1</sup> See also what Christ said to the Church: "*Go and teach.*" The Church appears among savages who have never heard the divine word, who possess at most a few fragments of tradition; the Church appears amongst them represented by a missionary who does not

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Romans, ch. 10, v. 17.



even know their language. What does he? You ask what he does! He erects a cross, and falls on his knees before it. The savages assemble around the unknown who prays; and he in a rude language, which he hardly articulates, makes known to them the God who died on that tree. And as at your cradle the language of your mother opened your ears to deposit ideas there which became the element of your reason, so the language of the Church opens the ears of these savages, reaches their intelligence, finds there the divine germ, quickens and develops it; the savages fall on their knees, believe in Christ who died for them, adore him with emotions which before were unknown to them, and their transformed souls aspire towards eternity; verifying the saying of Saint Paul, "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*"

Perhaps, gentlemen, you will raise the objection that there exists at least one difference between the engendering of faith and that of reason; it is that human language, falling upon the obscure root of natural ideas, elevates them to the greatest clearness; whilst the language of the Church, in spite of all its power, does not draw divine ideas from their gloomy and mysterious depth. You deceive yourselves, gentlemen. The mind does not arrive at an exact comprehension of divine ideas any more than it does of natural ideas, seeing that there remains alike in each the great unknown of substance; but divine ideas, like natural ideas, shine and enlighten; and if they did not enlighten, the understanding would never accept them. It is as impossible for the understanding to discern obscurity as it is for the eye to see darkness, except by the aid of light; now that which the understanding does not discern exists not for it. Before it can render itself to divine ideas they must be seen, and in order to be seen they must become clearly perceptible. Thus, gentlemen, here is a divine idea, "*Blessed are they that*



*weep!*" No sage possessed this idea, no one had expressed it; it is at first sight a foolish idea. Yet it is full of the clearest light for true Christians, and has dried up more tears than all the books of the philosophers put together. I agree, nevertheless, that it is obscure for you. How is this? How can an idea which is lucid for one mind be obscure for another?

It appears to me, gentlemen, very easy to explain. Even in the order of nature do we not see principles which are manifest to some whilst they cannot be seized by others? A mathematician understands from the first word a proposition which contains no sense even for a man ignorant of mathematics. And as to axioms themselves, the highest treasure of the intelligence, do you think you have understood them without trouble, on the electrical instant of their enunciation? No, gentlemen; a thousand thousand times, no. If your mother had told to you, for instance, that a thing is possible and is not possible at the same time, under the same point of view, assuredly you would not have understood her, although she would but have proposed to you the first truth in the order of logic. It is by imaginations, comparisons, repetitions, and application on your part that you have succeeded in forming your reason. Is it, then, to be wondered at that the divine word, reaching you late in life, in the middle of a century which has closed your ears to its lessons, experiences some difficulty in shaking your mind? Pardon me for so expressing myself to you; you are the deaf and dumb of the divine order. It is only by listening to the voice of the Church, and by meditating upon it, that you will overcome the resistance of your prejudices and the darkness which they have produced within you. See by experience, since you have sought the truth at the foot of this pulpit, how many ideas have passed before you, of which the connection, the order, the power were before

unknown to you? And yet what I have said to you is an atom in space, a drop of water in the ocean.

What would it be if a serious study had opened to you the riches hidden in religious teaching? You do not avail yourselves of this study, gentlemen, and you complain; you accuse faith of impossibility, and you will not accord to it in each week a quarter of an hour of your existence!

It is, gentlemen, that faith is not only an act of the intelligence, but also an act of the will. The will is the faculty of loving; and just as there flow from the intelligence two streams, the stream of reason and that of faith, so there flow from the will two deep waters, the waters of natural love and those of divine love. Natural love attaches us to the created world, divine love bears us towards the uncreated world; the former withdraws us from faith, the latter impels us towards it, even when it is yet only imperfect and in the state of presentiment or of desire. Listen well to yourselves; let it be that misfortune may have broken one of your ties, or that a melancholy note resound from the depths of your soul; every time that a happy inspiration lifts you above the earth, faith appears to you and imparts to you a sensation of itself. The axe of your will inclines itself by an imperceptible movement, and immediately faith has responded to you by a distant and obscure gleam of its light. If you were able to love you could believe. But how can we love that which is unseen, when we do not yet believe in it? If faith follow love, does not love proceed from faith? This objection supposes, gentlemen, that divine beauty and goodness are strangers to man, and that man is incapable of being attracted by them before faith reigns fully over his intelligence. If it were so, faith would be impossible; for it is necessary, according to the conditions of our being, that the will should give the movement to the mind, and the

will is only excited when solicited by the beauty and goodness of an object. In the same manner, then, as the language of the Church finds in the soul and quickens there the germ of divine ideas, it should also find in the soul and quicken there the germ of divine love. In the same way as nature, in appealing to the heart of man in order to move him, finds there all-prepared and inclined the fibre of terrestrial love. The law is also the same here for the two orders.

How do men excite natural love within themselves? By placing themselves in affinity with created things. We love light, because we communicate with it by the eyes; we love heat, because we communicate with it by all the pores; we love perfumes, because we communicate with them by the sense of smell; we love manifest beauty, because we communicate with it by all the senses. If you have not been placed in communication with an object, it is impossible for you to love it; as soon as you are placed in communication with it you are able to love it, and you will certainly love it if it have beauty and goodness in itself. See, gentlemen—and you are sufficiently aware of it—how natural love engenders itself. Now the law is the same for the engendering of divine love. God, who has endowed his creatures with so much grandeur, with attractions so victorious, so that our hearts may be touched by them, has not acted with less of power and of profusion in manifesting to the gaze of men the divine beauty and perfection. These he displayed to them in the God-man living among us, and dying for us on Calvary from his love for mankind; and he has written the Gospel to convey to our hearts the unspeakable history of that life and of that death. Without doubt faith of itself imparts to us the certainty that God has loved us even unto death; but why does it not solicit the adhesion of the will to the love which it expresses and which it contains, in the same way as

language solicits the adhesion of the mind to the ideas which it contains ? Language, human and divine, performs two offices : it enlightens and touches, it produces light and affection ; only it is necessary for us to yield to it, as well for divine love as for natural ; for the one and for the other the consenting act of the will is necessary.

Without the exercise of the will every thing is impossible ; faith like all the rest, but not more so than the rest. We should only have a right to complain if Christianity had contained nothing which might sufficiently excite our will to draw it towards itself. But this imputation would be without foundation. When we reject Christianity we reject, by preconceived ingratitude, the greatest love which the world could ever have looked for ; by an extreme effort we abuse our moral liberty, and change into a curse against us that sweet hymn which the angels sang at the coming of the Son of Man, "*Peace on earth to men of good will !*"<sup>1</sup>

Peace on earth to men of good will ! This is the saying which explains to us how it is that there are so many men who know nothing, who nevertheless attain to faith. They attain it by the road of love ; their souls, which did not easily respond to divine ideas because of their elevation, have responded without difficulty to the touchings of charity. They have recognized God from the heart more than from the judgment, and light, jealous of their hearts, rushed in there with love. This is the wonder which men have desired to dishonor by calling it *la foi du charbonnier*. Gentlemen, the faith of the *charbonnier* exists to no greater extent than the reason of the *charbonnier*. The reason of the *charbonnier* is as good as that of Newton ; and many a peasant who has cut wood in the forest of Versailles has had illuminations on divine things as profound as those of Bossuet astonishing the court of Louis XIV.

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, ch. 2, v. 14.



by his eloquence and his doctrine. Yes, at the day of judgment some of these *charbonniers* will appear in their humble costume, who will have had more faith and light than some theologians, because love sees further than intelligence, and because, when the soul gives its consent, truth bears it away with itself, as an eagle places its young upon its back and bears them towards the sun.

We have said, gentlemen, that the engendering of faith, similar in its process to the engendering of reason, supposes the divine germs of knowledge and of love to be sown within us by the hand of God. The help of God is, then, necessary to us in order to obtain faith, and this help is free on His part, at least when, having abused His gifts, we have by our own fault weakened their virtue. The liberty of man calls evidently for the counterpoise of the liberty of God; and God being estranged from man, the mystery of faith can no longer be accomplished within us, if we have no power to recall there the action of God. But how shall we recall that action? Who will be strong enough to do violence to God, and to do him violence without affecting His liberty?

Gentlemen, after Achilles had killed Hector, and had dragged him seven times around the besieged city, in the evening, at the threshold of his tent, an old man, disarmed, presented himself. It was Priam. He came to demand back from the inexorable conqueror the mangled body of his son, and, having kissed his hand, he said to him, "Judge of the greatness of my misfortune, since I have kissed the hand which has killed my son!" Achilles wept and gave up the body of his enemy. What power rent that savage heart? What charm triumphed over him? That power, that charm, was prayer. If power had not on some hand met with a barrier to check its sway, if there were here below only force against force, what would have become of the meek and lowly? God owed to weakness and mis-



fortune an arm which should make the sword powerless, calm anger, extinguish misery, and repair the inequality of condition: He gave them prayer. Prayer is the queen of the world. Covered with humble apparel, the head bent, the hand outstretched, she protects the universe by her entreating power. She flies unceasingly from the heart of the weak to the heart of the strong; and the more lowly the place whence her lamentations arise, the greater is the dominion to which she attains, the more her empire is assured. If an insect could pray to us when we are about to tread upon it, its prayer would excite in us great compassion; and as nothing is higher than God, no prayer is more victorious than that which ascends towards Him. It is prayer, gentlemen, which re-establishes our intercourse with God, which recalls to us His action, which does violence to Him without injuring His liberty, and which is consequently the mother of faith. This is why Jesus Christ said, "*Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*"<sup>1</sup>

I see the objection: is it that in order to pray faith is not necessary? And if it be necessary to pray for faith, is it not an imperfect circle? Ah, yes, gentlemen, an imperfect circle! I believe I have already said it, the world is full of these imperfect circles. But see how God escapes from this. To pray, I admit that faith is necessary, at least a faith begun: but do you know what a faith begun is? Faith begun is doubt; doubt is the commencement of faith as fear is the beginning of love. I do not speak of that scepticism which affirms in doubting, but of that doubt which is familiar to many of my hearers, of that sincere doubt which causes them to say to themselves, yet, perhaps

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, chap. 7, v. 7, 8.

after all, mean and imperfect being that I am, I am the work of a Providence who governs me and who watches over me! Perhaps that blood which but just now flowed upon the altar is the blood of a God who has saved me! Perhaps I may be able to attain to the knowledge, the love of this God! Perhaps! that doubt, gentlemen, is that which is the beginning of faith, and that faith begun, you will not easily root it out of your heart; God has made it fast there with the diamond. This is faith in its vague state, which will pass on to the state of conviction if you desire it, which will not proceed if you do not desire it; which lends itself to all, to affirming God or to denying him, to loving or to hating him. You possess this faith so really that you struggle against it, and desire to rid yourself of it. Even persecution is a homage which you pay to it; men persecute only that which they esteem. Persecution comes from faith which does not avow itself and which fears even itself; persecution is an act of faith. The philosophers of antiquity despised paganism; they also left its gods alone. These gods did not impart faith; this is why the philosophers did not fear them. Doubt never descended into their hearts from before Jupiter and Neptune. But when Christianity came, these princes who believed not in their own idols, and who were so contented with being great sacrificers, these rich men who took pleasure in the haughtiness of their hecatombs, these writers who flattered Apollo and Mercury, all these stood up against the truth. They stood up when the truth made them afraid, when faith took possession of them with doubt. Yes, we are hated only because we possess too much truth, truth too visible. Ah! if we brought falsehood to men they would adore us; they would place us upon the altars, and say to us: Give faith to the multitude, and make them serve you. But as we pretend to impart belief to the small as well as to the great, as we penetrate through their vices and their

passions in order at least to carry doubt into their hearts, they lift themselves up against us, they would impose silence upon us, they would that from henceforth nothing in the world might speak to them of God, that they might see if conscience would continue to direct them towards Him.

We can, then, gentlemen, all pray, because we all believe or doubt. Insects of a day, lost under a blade of grass, we waste our strength in vain reasoning. We ask ourselves whence we come, and whither we go: but can we not pronounce these words: O thou, whoever thou mayest be who hast created us, deign to lift me up from my doubt and misery! Who cannot thus pray? Who is excusable if he does not endeavor to found his faith upon prayer?

May I, gentlemen, at least have inspired you with the good thought of turning yourselves towards God in prayer, and of renewing your relations with him, not only by the mind, but also by the impulsion of the heart! I bear this hope away with me, this is my desire in parting from you. I leave in the hands of my bishop this pulpit of Nôtre-Dame, established from henceforth, established by him and by you, by the pastor and by the people. For a moment this double suffrage has shone upon my head: suffer me to remove it from myself, and permit me again to be alone for some time in presence of my weakness, and before God.



OF THE  
EFFECTS OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE  
UPON THE MIND.





## FOURTEENTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE RATIONAL CERTAINTY PRODUCED IN THE MIND BY  
CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,<sup>1</sup>

GENTLEMEN,

DOCTRINE is the science of life. Life, according to the definition of Saint Thomas, of Aquinas, is a spontaneous motion. All motion bears in its very essence the idea of a starting point, of a point to be reached, and of an effort to pass from the one to the other; and, consequently, the science of existence is the science of the starting point of man, of the point to be attained by him, and of the road or means by which he is to proceed.

Now, Catholic doctrine teaches us that God is the starting point of man, that God is the point to be attained by him, and that God made man is the way—the means which conduct him to this end: “*I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.*” “*There is but one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.*”<sup>2</sup> And, consequently, beyond all dispute, Catholic doctrine is the most elevated of all doctrines; for, whatever the human mind may do, it is impossible for it to conceive a starting point more elevated than God, a point to be attained more elevated than God, a mediator more elevated

<sup>1</sup> Mgr. Affre, archbishop of Paris.

<sup>2</sup> Apocalypse, ch. 1, v. 8; St. Paul, 1st Epistle to Timothy, ch. 2, v. 5.

than God made man. Then, metaphysically, and by the nature of things, Catholic doctrine occupies the highest summit to which the human mind can reach, and all doctrine, of whatever kind it may be, which comes after it, or by the side of it, is compelled to range itself in degrees which are lower than that which Catholic doctrine occupies. We are placed on the summit by the force of ideas themselves, and it would seem that I ought, at once, to contemplate that height ; I ought to regard Catholic doctrine in its visible appearance and in its centre, and, like Moses, bring down my language from that contemplation, and dazzle you by its rays drawn from the place where, with the Divine Essence, our doctrine itself reposes.

I shall not, however, yet do this ; for every doctrine being a principle of life, good or bad, necessarily acts upon the existence of man, of nature, and of society, and may, consequently, be considered with regard to the effects which it produces in this triple region. Now, it is more natural for us thus to study a doctrine within our reach, than to pursue in the first place its mysteries even to their metaphysical nature. I propose, then, gentlemen, after having already shown to you the necessity of the Catholic Church, her constitution, her authority, the sources of her doctrine, I propose, in continuation of the same work upon the same plan, to show to you the effects of that doctrine upon man, nature, and society ; so that afterwards we may be prepared to pursue it by an humble yet bold flight, even to the throne of God.

I will commence by considering the effects of Catholic doctrine upon the mind of man.

The chief design of a doctrine—its chief effort—its inevitable tendency is to conquer minds : there is no conqueror in the world so impatient about the limits of his territory, so straitened within the boundaries of his power—none who feels more strongly struggling within him the desire

to combat and to subjugate, than a doctrine ; for a doctrine is life—it is the principle of all life ; doctrine, in its first cause, is God himself—God, the sovereign truth, the living truth, the truth which does not look upon itself in order to see itself, but which sees itself without opening its eyes, because it is at the same time its own organ of vision and its own light. And if the sun is so urgent to communicate to us his rays, if he precipitates them into our vision with so much rapidity, what must it be with infinite light, what must it be with Catholic doctrine, what must it be with all doctrine which, after all, derives its source from God, even when it is erroneous ? For, gentlemen, absolute error—perfect darkness—does not exist : nothingness cannot exist ; and all false doctrine, even when it deceives us, derives its power from a vestige of truth ; I should not say of the Divine Essence, but of something which has come from it, and which makes the phantoms which please us pass for actual and luminous stars.

The aim of doctrine, then, is to govern minds : this it does not disguise ; and I, living doctrine, to whom it has been said in the persons of my ancestors : “ *Go and teach all nations,* ”—I . . . for why should you wish me to hide my ambition from you ? . . . I have an ambition which is without bounds : my ambition is greater than the ocean ; my desire of domination over every creature capable of hearing the divine word, is, as Saint Paul expressed it, “ *to bring into captivity every understanding and every high thing that exalteth itself,* ” by the power of the doctrine which comes from God. Therefore, our ambition is great, and if you have a doctrine, that ambition is also your own. Let us not dissemble ; let us declare that we are men who desire to conquer all, to obtain possession of minds, to govern them. And why ? Is it from a selfish desire of pre-eminence ? No, gentlemen, it is because truth is also charity ; because light is also heat, and because heat can-

not exist without conveying warmth, without extending itself. Therefore the desire to extend truth confounds itself with the desire of practising charity. When we desire to conquer, it is that we wish to open our hearts and there to hide, there to keep the whole human race. Ah! without doubt men will pardon us for it!

Now, gentlemen, no doctrine obtains dominion over minds but on condition of imparting to them the certainty of its truth; as long as a doctrine does not seize upon minds so as to appear certain to them, it is but a light more or less seductive, which seeks the adhesion of the mind, but has not at all obtained it; which is still distinct from the intelligence, and is treated by it as a guest more or less familiar, but not as necessarily forming a part of the inmates of the house. Certainty establishes a perfect unity between the intelligence and doctrine; it is the point of meeting and of junction of the intellectual light and the doctrinal light, as sight is the point of meeting and of junction of the visive faculty and the ray of light. There are many kinds of certainty, according to the manner by which doctrine becomes introduced into the understanding and takes possession of it. I will apply myself first to the consideration of rational certainty.

Rational certainty is a conviction reflected, sovereign, immutable: reflected—that is to say, giving an account of itself to itself, knowing its motives, discussing them, resisting by logic the reasons opposed to it, which aim at its destruction; sovereign—that is to say, governing practical life as well as that of thought, and capable of leading us to prefer death rather than betray it by a disavowal; immutable—that is to say, subsisting within us with such a constancy of lucidity, that it could only perish there by acts which would be regarded as acts of folly or of crime.

And a certainty of this kind is not, gentlemen, a matter of slight wonder; men do not attain to believing a



thing with a conviction reflected, sovereign, immutable, without difficulty. Our minds are tormented by so many contrary doctrines ! In the evening, in our cabinet, at our fireside, the head resting on our hand, we think ; a system of life appears to us ; it touches our elbow, saying to us ; "Listen to me, I am truth." We walk in a street ; a friend, a companion of our early years puts his hand upon our shoulder ; a long time has elapsed since we saw him ; he has met and known in the world some men who have persuaded him ; he says to us : "Listen, I possess a doctrine, I possess truth." You recollect that night in the history of the second Brutus. Surrounded by the misfortunes of his country, one evening he thought of all that which pre-occupies serious men, when they bear in their minds the weight of the falling empire. At that moment his door opened, a kind of spirit appeared to him, he stood up and said to it : "Who art thou?" And the spirit answered : "I am thy evil genius ; we shall meet again at Philippi." For us, gentlemen, it is the contrary. Spirits appear to us, and say to us : "I am thy good genius ; we shall meet again at the last hour." What is human reason to do, beaten about thus by so many contrary doctrines, each vigorously defended by eloquence and devotedness ? What uncertainties ! What tortures ! The little bark of the fisherman who sets forth to gain the means of existence for his family, struggling through the night in the midst of storms and tempests, is it not a thousand times more tranquil and more calm than our own minds ?

Add to this external cause of perturbation the weakness of our intellectual power. Contradictory ideas not only pass and repass continually before us, but our internal vision is naturally weak and prone to fascination. If the doctrine which is presented to it be truth, it will be dazzled by its light, it will not have the power to bear it ; if

it be error, the darkness will render it obscure, it will believe that it sees that which it will not see.

In fine, the liberty which our mind enjoys, serves also to keep us away from the shores of certainty. It causes us to experience a degree of horror of those irrevocable ties, which would take away from it a part of its sovereignty; truth, known in all its splendor, with all its empire, appears to it to be a state of bondage; and, notwithstanding the anguish which doubt creates, it likes better to wander from one shore to the other, than to cast anchors in the port, which are never to be raised again.

These obstacles to certainty are great; but how much more so, when Catholic doctrine is concerned in it? In every other matter we touch, so to say, the objects; it is a question of nature, of society, of ordinary phenomena, of human testimony, of documents which are within our reach; but Catholic doctrine, notwithstanding its external phenomena, merges into regions hidden from us in a very different manner. Does it speak to us of the Divine Essence? It is one Unity and three Persons really distinct from each other. Does it speak to us of divine acts? It is one of these Divine Persons who has taken upon Himself our flesh, our spirit; who died, whom we crucified, and whose blood, shed for us, instead of crushing and destroying mankind, has saved it. If certainty is difficult in itself how much more so is it when such mysteries are in question?

And, in addition, gentlemen, no doctrine has been more combated here below than Catholic doctrine. Enter those sepulchres which men call libraries: select at hazard, find me a book really Catholic, one, relating to history, astronomy, mathematics, systems of the world, to the falling stone, to the soaring balloon, relating to everything, to anything, which does not anathematize Christianity! Everything conspires against us; there is nothing which does not

speak against us, which is not eloquent against us. Well then ! this certainty, so difficult for all, so difficult for us in particular ; this certainty, which has only enemies, we possess. I possess it ; I feel it breathing in my bosom. My brethren and I have passed beyond your books, beyond your power, beyond all that which you have placed against our souls ; we have made our way in the world, and are here before you. Behold us here, certain of ourselves and of our doctrine !

Is it really true, however, that we possess a rational certainty with regard to Christianity ? that is to say, a conviction, reflected, sovereign, immutable. Reflected . . . gentlemen, I do not say so of everything. Remark attentively, I do not now speak of that faith which is an operation of the grace of God ; I do not speak of that supernatural light which may be given to the infant on coming into the world : this is not my position. I speak of a conviction which is the result of reflection, which knows the motives of its faith, of the conviction of Saint Augustine, of Saint Thomas of Aquinas, of Bossuet, of Fénelon, of that certainty which, in a great number of minds, is superadded to the other, and of which the Church maintains possession. For the Church has not permitted those to succeed who have desired to despoil her of rational motives, of all logical outposts, of her position in the present and visible order ; she has saved reason, as she has saved faith. Unceasingly occupied in maintaining the domain of faith ; its divine omnipotence over souls ; the domain of grace which crushed the pride of Saint Paul at Damascus ; she maintains also the domain of reason, which, without doubt, is less powerful ; but which exists, which arms itself, and fights for us, and causes our faith to be not only a supernatural act, but an act of exalted reason. Doubtless, it will not be denied that this alliance of faith and reason existed in Saint August-

ine, in Saint Thomas of Aquinas, in Bossuet, in Fénelon, and in so many others, whose names I will not attempt to repeat lest they should crowd upon my lips more closely even than your heads crowd together in this temple. It will not be denied that these great geniuses were at the same time men of faith and men of reason ; that they have wielded with an equal superiority the arm of logic and that of grace. Who will deny that we possess reason ? Is it because we humble it at the feet of faith ; because we say that a finite light cannot equal infinite light ? The sun is not God ; yet it nevertheless gives light to the world. We possess, then, a conviction, which is the result of reflection, with regard to Christianity ; we are children before God, who has made us ; but children who behold their Father, who hold converse with Him, who approach Him, and embrace Him, who address to Him with eloquence the language of time and that of eternity.

Our conviction is equally sovereign. It governs the operations of our minds and the works of our practical activity. Without doubt, all Christians do not live in conformity to the doctrine of Jesus Christ ; there are too many of them who deny the Gospel by their actions. But the momentary contradiction of these only renders more apparent the fidelity of the others, by showing how much it costs the corruption of man to live always like a true Christian. Christianity, moreover, not only inspires men to practise a course of morals regulated according to its laws, it inspires them also with heroic devotion ; it conducts its missionaries to the most distant lands ; it peoples the hospitals with its sisters of charity ; it creates in souls resources equal to the fertility of misfortune and misery ; it has its anchorites, its cenobites, its men of patient endurance, as well as preachers ; and, above all, its martyrs, who do not suffer even to death ; it has those also who, in the very hands of the executioner, declare the sover-



eignty of their conviction. What doctrine has given surer guarantees of its full possession of minds?

It is true, that at first sight, Catholic conviction does not appear to be endowed with perfect steadfastness, since it is a matter of faith that the Christian is always free to abdicate it by the prevarication of apostasy, and of which there are, in history, examples too memorable and too certain. But even these examples, by the stupor which they have left behind them, prove to us their rarity and the magnitude of the intellectual crime which has caused them. Apostasy is to the religious order that which madness is to the natural order, a lamentable exception, which no more destroys the certainty of faith than the other destroys the certainty of reason. With the exception of children, in whom Christianity is as yet only a sentiment and a habit, every man who accepts it of himself, by a matured act, feels, notwithstanding his existing liberty, that he would not more easily renounce faith than reason. You have surrounding you young men who have betrayed the hopes of their Christian education : you know no serious men, who, having once recognized, from the full exercise of their conscience, the divinity of Catholic doctrine, have afterwards rejected it as a deceitful burden. The more the Christian advances, by the course of years, towards the horizon of eternity, the more his conviction becomes strengthened above all other things ; as the traveller who climbs the Alps sees the intermediate heights diminish in proportion as he ascends, until at last he sees before him only the highest summit of Mont Blanc.

Catholic doctrine produces, then, in the mind a conviction reflected, sovereign, immutable—that is to say, a rational certainty. Now, rational certainty is the most powerful production of a doctrine ; and consequently, Catholic doctrine exercises power to the highest degree. But that conclusion is not sufficient : in order to arrive at



a more perfect conclusion, it is necessary to know what is the active cause of rational certainty.

There are doctrines which possess worth, and others which are of no value: doctrines which among other phenomena produce that of rational certainty; others which do not produce it. Whence arises this difference? It is manifest that the value of a doctrine depends upon the amount of truth which it contains; for a doctrine being no other thing than the exposition of that which is, its merit lies evidently in the conformity of that which it declares, with the reality. In other words, a doctrine comprises but two elements, error or truth, either the one or the other, or both together; and if it is not truth which determines its intrinsic value, it must be error—that is to say, that which is not, that which is nothing in itself—a consequence inadmissible by reason. Without doubt, eloquence would invest error with a certain prestige, by clothing it with the garb of truth; but eloquence dies with the word, and sooner or later, the doctrine would find itself again left alone with its natural weight, which is the quantity of truth which it contains; and its definite action is always proportionate to that quantity. When it produces rational certainty, which is the result of its highest action upon the mind, it is because truth is there in its unadulterated state. Otherwise, we must conclude that error also produces rational certainty; in which case, the effects of error and of truth being the same, it is manifest that there would be left to us no means of discerning them: this would be the total destruction of all reason. The final effect of error upon the understanding cannot be the same as the final effect of truth, any more than the final effect of crime upon the soul can be identical with the final effect of virtue. Even as the hardening of the heart is not peace, so the hardening of the mind is not certainty; and as remorse pursues crime even to the most

hidden recesses of conscience to trouble it, so doubt pursues error into the last intrenchments of sophistry, in order to punish it. Wherever, then, rational certainty exists, there is truth; now, Catholic doctrine produces rational certainty; Catholic doctrine is then true, and as it produces that certainty in spite of the most obstinate resistance from without and from within, truth is contained in it in its highest power. When the sea of Holland bursts the dykes, there is a power in the sea which is not found in the hands of men, neither in the science which has formed the dykes.

You will say to me, we also possess the certainty of our incredulity. Well, then! certainty for certainty, these are two terms which reciprocally annul each other; Catholicism has possessed its men of genius; we also have had ours. It has had its martyrs; incredulity also has had its martyrs: the case then, is equal on both sides—remain as you are; we also have the right to continue as we are.

No, gentlemen, you do not feel the certainty of your incredulity, and if you did, we should not possess the certainty of our faith; for two contradictory certainties mutually exclude each other. I divide you into two classes: some of you have studied the question of religion, the others know it only by prejudice. Those who have not studied the question have no right to claim the benefit of rational certainty; and do they not form the greater number among you? I appeal to you as judges: what have you done in order to place yourselves in connection with Catholic doctrine? What have you read? What have been the subjects of your meditations? In what solitude have you collected the powers of your minds before the problem of your destinies? Which of you has sufficiently weighed God in his hands, to address to Him with justice an eternal affirmation or denial?

As to the learned—to those who have strenuously con-

sulted many books and many ideas, and to whom I grant, if they desire it, that they have also closely scrutinized Christianity in their investigations—is it necessary for me to contest their certainty? Who does not know the mind of a learned man? Who has not heard the sad lamentations of those men who have explored everything, and who, in their long navigation on the ocean of things, have only brought forth, with a more extended knowledge, more profound doubts? Gentlemen, truth meets all at the hour of death: it is there where we must judge of the sincerity and of the value of the two doctrines—of the value of Catholicism and of the value of unbelief. Where is the Catholic, at the hour of death, who regrets his faith? And how many, on the contrary, are there of unbelievers who press their dying lips on the crucifix, in adoration of that which they had blasphemed, and cursing that which they had adored! D'Alembert, that great geometrician, was on his death-bed. A young man approached him, and said to him, with affectionate candor: "Monsieur D'Alembert, you have been always kind to me: permit me to ask you one question. Does all that which you and your friends have written of Christianity appear now to you to be certain?" D'Alembert, affected by a generous impulse, answered: "Ah! certain."

See, gentlemen, the last word of science and of genius with regard to religion, when they are kept to themselves, and have only desired by isolated reason to draw conclusions from the divine testimony. Knowledge exhausts life, and does not fill it. Yes, princes of earthly thought, you have hollowed out a deep and wonderful well, but you have not filled it. Between you and ourselves, to say all in one word, behold the difference: we believe, and you doubt!

Granted, do you say? We seek, and there is our merit; we are not certain, we seek to obtain it of every breeze

that blows, we ask it of whoever is able to speak with eloquence; but, besides incredulity, do there not exist false religions? These false religions, do they possess certainty? And if they do, what does your Catholic certainty prove? The worshipper of Jupiter dies in peace—the disciple of Mahomet dies in peace; you said, just now, that you would wait for us on the bed of death; well, we invoke this bed of death in favor of the most extravagant modes of worship.

Gentlemen, if I admit this, will it not be a very striking phenomenon, that human knowledge is incapable of imparting peace of mind at the hour of death, whilst the worshipper of Jupiter, the faithful Mahometan, the observer of a worship, however savage and unreasonable it may be, may obtain peace in his religion. What is then the charm of religion if it be true that it suffices to adore, to bend the knee to earth, lift the eyes towards heaven, and say in any language: My God! if it suffice, do I say, for a human soul to pronounce that name of God, to be strengthened, consoled, and calm in death? Do you not see that you can say nothing more fatal to yourselves, and that even the error of religions possessed by minds of every kind, and imparting that peace to them which you do not feel, proves that you are not in the road of humanity; that the Negro, the Caffir, or the Hottentot, are happier than you; that they have more true knowledge than you have, and that God, in all countries, in all times, under all forms, rewards the soul that believes in him? Yes, the false religions will lift up their voices against you on the day of judgment, yes, it will be said to you: Sages, I gave peace to mankind—to my negroes—to my savages—to my Caribbeans—they lived in peace under the shadow of my name; and you, who have tormented yourselves, who have taken within your own selves your starting point and your fulcrum, like those unhappy beings who would carry them-



selves away by their own efforts, you have remained plunged in doubt and agitation, you have only obtained from your studies, despair, which has not even taught you your powerlessness. This answer will perhaps suffice, gentlemen ; but I wish to show you that false religions do not possess rational certainty, that is to say, they do not impart to their disciples a conviction reflected, sovereign, immutable.

Was there a doctrine even in paganism ? Was there in it any reflection or teaching ? Of what use can it be to discuss about that in which there is not even the shadow of reason ? Thus, when Jesus Christ came into the world what did the Roman empire ? At first it held its peace, resting upon its powerful sword ; but when it saw those Galileans, who spread themselves over the empire, who appeared in the senate, who had in the army, in the prætorship, approving friends and brethren ; when the empire became sensible of this march of persuasion, it roused itself and made a sign ; was it to speak ? To speak ! it drew that sword which had subjugated the world, and smote with it, without cessation, old men, women, and helpless children ; and that execrable cowardice is still the only defence of those false gods, wherever they remain. Where is reason ? Where is rational certainty ?

Ah ! when I meet with a soul which has not my faith, which believes not in the gentle words of Christ, I feel a tender pity for it. I bring myself to its level ; I draw it near to me, as much as its age and condition permit me to do so ; I do that which a mother might do in order to give to it the milk of love. It may despise my efforts, but it will not accuse them of being indicative of a faith without reason and without affection. But let a Christian fall into the power of those childish forms of worship, without confidence in themselves, because they feel their degradation, they would not even try to convince him ; they would



say to him : Bow down, or die. But the Christian is not silent, nor does he bow down his head ; the doctrine which is within him kindles and increases before peril : he remembers Calvary, and under the hand which is about to destroy him, he seeks still to persuade, even were it but his executioner. On which side is the conviction reflected, sovereign, immutable ?

Perhaps, at least in the Christian sects separated from Catholic unity, we shall be constrained to recognize rational certainty ? No more than elsewhere. The ignorant in these sects are incapable of arriving at rational certainty ; and the faith which they have, if their ignorance is invincible, is a purely supernatural faith, which is the fruit of grace, and which is able to save them. As to the learned of heresy, the force of logic leads them to destroy that which they would have wished to leave standing ; they undermine, sooner or later, the dogmas which they themselves recognized at first as fundamental ; and finally, they arrive at a Protestantism so complete, that it is only distinguished from rationalism by its name. I do not give you proofs of this, it is a history too visible even to the least practised sight, and I hasten to conclude by resuming : Neither in Christian sects, nor in heathen religions, nor elsewhere outside the pale of Catholic doctrine, is rational certainty produced with reference to divine things. We alone possess it ; and as there is no certainty in error, but in truth alone, Catholic doctrine is truth.

## FIFTEENTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE REPULSION PRODUCED IN THE MIND BY CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,  
GENTLEMEN,

WHEN the aged patriarch Jacob was upon his death-bed, he gathered around him his posterity ; and opening before them, for their instruction and our own, the vast field of the future, he said to one of his sons, called Judah : “ *The sceptre shall not depart from thy race, nor the government from thy house, till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expected of nations.*”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the first character by which Christ, the Son of God made Man, was expressly designated in the prophecies, was that of being the hope of nations. And at a later period, at the end of the prophetic age, another of those envoys of God said : “ *Yet a little while and I will move the heaven and the earth, and the Desired of all nations shall come.*”<sup>2</sup> And yet, gentlemen, another prophet exclaimed in very different language : “ *Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things ? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord, and against his Christ ; they have said : Let us break their bonds asunder, and let us cast away their yoke*

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, ch. 49, v. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Aggeus, ch. 2, v. 8.

from us.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, at the same time, Christ is designated under two contradictory characters, as the hope and as the desired of nations, and as the object of their rage and of their conjurations.

And when Jesus Christ was presented in the temple, what was the first language, Christians and gentlemen, men of the Church and men of this age, who can read, although with different ideas, the history of which you are the children, and which is still produced by your own hands, what was the first language which was addressed to him? An old man took into his arms that child which was just born, he regarded him with a love of which no human affection can give an idea, and he pronounced before his mother these words: “*Behold this Child is set for the ruin and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted!*”<sup>2</sup> And, finally, when that Child was grown up, and already fertilized the earth with His divine labors, addressing those fishermen whom He had chosen for disciples, He revealed to them in these terms, their own destiny and that of all their successors:—“*I came not to send peace, but the sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies shall be they of his own household. The brother shall deliver up the brother to death; and the father, the son; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall put them to death, and you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake.*”<sup>3</sup> And on the evening before His death, He said to them again: “*In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world.*”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 2, v. 1, 2, 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke, ch. 2, v. 34.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 10, v. 34, 35, 36, 21, and 22.

<sup>4</sup> St. John, ch. 16, v. 33.

Gentlemen, behold the prophecies, see that which was written before the accomplishment of the facts, and you are acquainted with their history. But perhaps you have not meditated upon that history; perhaps you do not thoroughly know the war which has been made against us. Sons of that war, born upon the field of battle, you yourselves bear against us the shield and the sword; we feel at each moment the blows which you inflict upon us. Reflect, however, upon the account of your past glories; survey, in order to excite your own energies, what your forefathers have done, in order that, having resisted all their efforts, we may bear before you the enjoyment of our victory. It is a glory which is permitted to us. The Spartan, when brought back to Sparta upon his shield, was permitted to enjoy his own country, in the air of which he wafted his last sigh.

I desire to show to you that if Catholic doctrine engenders in the human mind a rational certainty of its truth, as we have seen, it engenders also a strong feeling of repulsion; so that, the phenomenon being complex, it is not enough to have examined one of its branches, if we do not also examine the other, in order to seek their causes and draw from them a conclusion.

There are three kinds of reason which govern the world and which comprise the entire reason of mankind, namely: the reason of statesmen, the reason of men of genius, and popular reason.

The reason of statesmen is naturally elevated and religious. Yes, gentlemen, in your pre-occupations of these times, you are astonished perhaps at what I say; but this is certain, the reason of statesmen is elevated and religious. It is elevated: for the higher men are placed, the more they see: the man who sits at the helm knows that with which the passenger in his cabin is unacquainted; and when men hold not only the reins of the government

of a nation, but those which are interwoven and mingled together with all those which compose the whole general action of mankind, they perceive on one hand the difficulties, and on the other, their own weakness. I have somewhere read that one of the men who governed France at the close of the last century, in conversing familiarly with one of his friends, expressed his surprise at the irradiation which had been produced in his understanding only three days after he had been seated at the Luxembourg, and had held in his hand the destinies of France. When accounts of events, propositions, ideas, the interests which excite mankind, are heaped upon a man's table; when it becomes necessary for him to regulate them, to answer them, to take upon himself the responsibility of them, or put his name to that responsibility; then, gentlemen, then his mind becomes elevated, as it were, in spite of himself. There is no man, called suddenly into public life, who in passing from his own house into a palace has not been changed, transfigured; if he has not been, it is an evidence of such hopeless mediocrity that even the hand of God Himself would hardly be able to produce any thing from it.

The reason of statesmen is also religious reason, because the first thing which men feel when they are called upon to govern a nation, is their incapacity to do so. For men are only governed by force or by ideas. But force is an instrument which easily vacillates; and as to ideas, where is the man who can impose ideas upon his fellow-men, and who does not see that anterior to himself there are crowds of pre-existing ideas, against which he is powerless? What then does he? He calls God to his help; he places Him on his right hand; he acts like Lycurgus, like Minos, like Numa—he speaks in the name of God; he says that, for himself, he is nothing but dust and ashes; that he possesses only the ideas of men; but that God, to



a certain degree, has incarnated Himself within him ; and even when he does not believe in Him, religiously speaking, he believes in Him, as it were, inevitably : and do not think that it is by a vile hypocrisy. No ; all statesmen, with rare exceptions, sincerely believe in the necessity of God, and say, like Voltaire : " If God existed not, it would be necessary to invent Him."

Well, gentlemen ! this reason of statesmen ; this elevated and religious reason, has been against us from the beginning. And we have not only been persecuted by statesmen like Nero and Tiberius, but by such men as Trajan and Marcus Aurelius ; that is to say, by men who, at heart, possessed great and generous dispositions, and who displayed real genius in the government of Roman affairs. These men have been against us ; and it was the same with the greater part of the statesmen of the Lower Empire. After the Lower Empire came the Holy Roman Empire, and its history is that of a perpetual struggle with the Holy See and the Catholic Church, with few exceptions ; next the sixteenth century, in which the conjuration of statesmen against the Church of Christ caused her to totter in a part of Europe. In fine, everybody knows, I say it without entering into details, and with all the respect due to the reigning powers, everybody knows that now, the greater number of the statesmen of Europe are hostile to the Catholic religion, and combat it by all the means within their power. Now, gentlemen, this is a strange phenomenon, and one without parallel elsewhere. Find me in Paganism a statesman who has fought against it ; find me in Mahometanism a statesman who was an enemy to it ; show me one in the Greek schism, in Protestantism, in the Christian sects ; you will not discover any, I assure you. And among us, in our own bosom, the sons whom we have baptized, whom we have nourished, have revolted against that doctrine of their birth and of

their nation, which vivified and formed the whole history of the people whom they should lead ! I say that this is an amazing phenomenon.

The case is the same with the reason of men of genius. What is genius ? It is a mind in which imagination, intelligence, and feeling exist in an elevated proportion, and in an exact equation. It is a mind which has a penetrating view of ideas, which incarnates them powerfully in marble, in brass, in language, and in that dust which we call writing, which, also, communicates to ideas an impulse from the heart to precipitate them living into the hearts of others. Genius is, with conscience, the most beautiful endowment of humanity ; man may be robbed of his power, of his fortune ; but genius, like knowledge, is invulnerable.

You understand, by that single definition, that genius is elevated and religious reason ; for what do you suppose that men of genius perceive, if it is not the infinite ? Do you suppose that genius accepts matter for its home ? Do you suppose that genius dwells between the insects and the stars, between those two extremities of visible things ; that it will take up its abode there, and accept that lot ? Ah ! let a cold and dead science take matter for its domain, it is its lot ; but genius will never accept the prison of matter ; it will always surmount the world, it will always say, like Lucifer : " I will lift myself up by the side of the north wind upon the mountain, I will place my throne by the throne of God. " It is also, even by this, religious reason ; for when that elevation is obtained, when they reach God, they are in religion. And then what hinders men generally from being religious ? It is a littleness of mind, which accords with the present world ; a coldness of the heart, which cannot feel the love of God, which suffers when we say that God made himself man and died for us. But genius, in the fires which consume it, comprehends that God could become lowly, that He could die ;

nothing comprehends voluntary abasement better than that which is elevated.

This is why all the great minds of antiquity respected and propagated religious faith. Read Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Plutarch, Cicero, you will not find in them a phrase disrespectful to the gods. Passing beyond the surface of the worship of their time, they expressed in their writings sentiments so profoundly religious, that the Fathers of the Church have at each moment, by the side of the Gospel, cited maxims and passages borrowed from the poets, the orators, the historians, and from all the good geniuses of antiquity.

And yet, gentlemen, men of genius have been against us from the birth of Christianity. You know the attacks of the philosophers of Alexandria, then the succession of the heresiarchs, Arius, Photius, Luther. As yet this was but a prelude; I pass rapidly over these facts to arrive at the great fact, to that conjuration of men of genius uniting themselves together to declare war against Christianity, calling, in actual language, the Son of God, before whom every knee should bow in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, and in hell, calling Him by the name of *l'infâme*, convoking all mankind to break down His altars, and Europe, answering to that conspiracy of unbelief constituted it into a real power. This fact is not to be seen elsewhere, neither amongst the heathens, nor amongst the Mahometans, nor in any other religion, however worthless it might be; it is peculiar to Christianity; and assuredly I have a right to wonder at it, and to ask you also to be astonished at it.

I come now, gentlemen, to popular reason. Popular reason is the practical good sense of life. The people do not study, they will never study; the people are not learned, they will never be so. God, in exchange for philosophy and learning, has given them an instinct of exist-

ence ; they know to a certain degree how to discern in the things which surround them, the good, the useful, the true. A poor workman in his shop will allow himself to be deceived by your philosophy ; but when it becomes a question of providing masters for his children, he will not be deceived, he will go straight to the true master, he will choose some brother hidden under a habit, despised perhaps, but devoted.

This is what I call popular reason. It is this reason which saves the world when statesmen and men of genius neglect to accomplish their mission, and betray the cause of humanity with the cause of God. It is the reason of the men of toil, of the mechanic, of the poor, who resist the misleadings of statesmen and men of genius. O people ! whom the Lord Jesus loved ; O people ! I bless thee for that thou hast received from God understanding and instinct sufficient to enable thee to struggle against the treason of thy masters, when they misuse their strength and their dignity against thee and against all ! And yet, gentlemen, this popular reason is also turned against us. And this astonishes me more than all the rest. For, in fine, it can be conceived that God might humble a prince, that He might withdraw his light from him to punish his pride ; I can understand that He might humble an erring man of genius : but that men should have been able to deceive these poor people, to pervert their instincts ; that they should have been able to persuade them that the Church, which is come to lift them up, which has destroyed slavery, would bring them into bondage ; that men have been able to persuade them to do that which they could not persuade Pagans, Mahometans, Protestants, savages to do ; that they have been able to persuade them to rush upon the altars of our Lord Jesus Christ ; that they have overthrown them ; that they have trampled underfoot those saints, those patrons whose names they received in



baptism ; that they should have profaned even the tabernacles where reposed, undefended, the object of their adoration but the day before,—this is inexplicable, that which is seen in the Catholic Church, and nowhere else.

How is it that the reason of statesmen, the reason of men of genius, and popular reason should be lifted up against Catholic doctrine? When I say the reason of statesmen, and of men of genius, I do not mean that they have all been so. We have had some of these men in our ranks. By the side of Trajan, Dioclesian, and Julian, we have seen Constantine, Theodosius, Charlemagne, Saint Louis, Ferdinand the Catholic, Alfred the Great, and so many others ; by the side of Celsus and Porphyrius, we have seen Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory of Nazianzen, Saint Basil, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Thomas of Aquinas, Saint Bonaventure, and so many others whom I refrain from naming, in order not to approach too near to the men of our own epoch : for, if I approach them, could I refrain from naming that illustrious veteran, that prince of French and Christian literature, over whom posterity appears to have passed already, so much do we respire in his glory the perfume and the peace of antiquity? I acknowledge it without pain, if Catholic doctrine has had for adversaries statesmen and men of genius, it numbers also amongst them those who are devoted to it ; if the people have overthrown its temples, it is also the people who built them up. But the problem nevertheless exists ; it becomes even on that account more serious. For, are there then two kinds of reason struggling together in humanity? Are we like Pantheus, when he was touched by the gods, and saw two Thebes in Greece and two suns in the universe?

It is certain that Catholic doctrine leads the human mind to a rational certainty of its truth ; it is also certain that it creates in the mind a formidable opposition. The



three kinds of reason which make up the total reason of mankind, all three being naturally elevated and religious, all three struggle violently against Catholic doctrine, yet they also all worship and adore it. What is the cause of this strange antagonism? Can it be that the human mind is repugnant to all religious doctrine? But it has never existed without religious doctrine. Can it be that Catholic doctrine might have an immoral character? But all the world admits that it is purer than any other. Does it oppress mankind? The dignity of its poorer classes and the liberty of all have only been developed under its reign. At the very least, however, the Catholic doctrine and priesthood are as good as the Egyptian, the Greek, the Roman, and the Mahometan doctrines and priesthood, which have never been hated or persecuted in their own country. Next, the question will still remain unsolved, even if the truth of these reproaches be admitted; for it is not only necessary to know how and why Catholic doctrine is repulsed by the human mind, but how and why it is at the same time repulsed and accepted. It is necessary to ascertain for what reason it is at the same time an object of hatred and of love, why it convinces and does not convince, why it is the centre of attraction and of repulsion, why it is the same of Catholic doctrine as of the sun, which attracts the stars, and makes them describe a curve, which neither permits them to become confounded with himself, nor to fly into a space in which he would exercise no action upon them. This is the question.

Shall we solve it by saying that there exists in Catholic doctrine good and evil,—good which attracts, and evil which repulses? But when good and evil exist in a thing that thing is mediocre, it is neither supremely loved, nor supremely hated; it is tolerated, it is left alone, as we allow a vulgar man to pass by us unnoticed. Now, mankind does not pass by Catholic doctrine, mankind seizes

upon it, in order to attack it or to adore it, mankind becomes its adorer or its enemy, and that invariably during eighteen centuries ! Once more, this is the question.

Now, what have superior minds in these later times invented to explain so marvellous an enigma ? They have said, and here, gentlemen, you will recognize a grave doctrine, a doctrine which, to a certain degree, renders justice to the phenomena which occur in the world ; it is no longer the doctrine of the last century, but an idea more exalted, more deserving, more peaceful ; they have said that humanity is a prey to two powers : one liberal, independent, sovereign, which is reason ; and another, also generous, ardent, impatient of the limits within which reason is kept, which would pass beyond them, become united to God, and receive in a revealed word a rule for its actions and its decisions ; which is faith. The struggle between these two powers, between the rational power and the religious power, commenced only at the epoch of Christianity, because before Christianity, religion not being worthily represented, faith did not find in the world a support equal to its aspirations. Reason then treated Religion with deference, as a sister who could not dispute its throne, and whom it was necessary to treat well, even out of respect for her weakness. But when Christianity appeared, when the good tidings were spread abroad, it became necessary for human reason to compete with the Divine word, and that, the power of faith being increased, the power of reason should increase also, that it should keep its ground, and dispute it foot by foot. The history of this struggle is the history of mankind during eighteen centuries. Yes, say they, faith is a great and real power ; yes, there is in the world a Divine word, whatever may be its origin and nature, and that word exercises dominion : no one, since Jesus Christ, has been able to deprive it of its sovereignty, and probably no one ever will ; it is not

even to be desired that any one should do so. But reason also, is sovereign, and faith will no more dethrone reason than reason will dethrone faith. They must respect each other; if they do not become closely united, they should at least recognize their respective rights and their dignity. The uncivilized time of religion is past, the barbarous period, which was regarded as religious, is past also; mankind from henceforth is like the sun, which recognizes two laws of its power, which would fall into ruin by violating either. This is the doctrine invented to explain the antagonism of the human mind with regard to Catholicism.

Now, gentlemen, I recognize the two powers of which they speak: the Church has never contested them. Yes, there are two powers in the human mind: reason, acquiring its principle in the natural order; and religion, which has been transmitted from age to age, even to us, by means of tradition and authority. But the error of the system lies in the idea that the Author of the human race should have given it two powers which produce contradictory conclusions, instead of agreeing harmoniously together; that is to say, that unity, being the law of all existences, being an absolute necessity for all that which lives, God should have placed in the bosom of the human race two powers, *enémies* to each other and irreconcilable: this is not possible. Being and unity are one and the same thing, Saint Thomas has excellently said. Mankind has not left the hands of God in a state of *Manicheism*. There are within us two principles which harmonize together: reason and faith render the same sound to all eternity, although each in a different manner. They are like the *Æolian* and *Ionian* harps. The *Æolian* harp, suspended in the forest, sighed by the free action of the wind; the *Ionian* harp was touched by the practised hands of artists; but they both understood and answered each other. Reason is like the *Æolian* harp—savage,

abandoned to itself, becoming inspired and animated in tempests ; faith is like the Ionian harp—better regulated, more certain of itself, more divine : but the lyre of nature and that of art, the lyre of men and that of the children of God, both, in the main, sing the same canticle ; they speak of God to the universe, they declare forth His name, they prophesy of Him, they render thanks to Him, they bear away man into immortality by their harmonious and unanimous action. It is reason full of wilful pride which does not hear the sounds of faith ; it is ignorant faith which does not hear the sounds of reason and render justice to them. Yes, as Hippocrates said of the human body, all harmonizes by common consent in humanity : reason and faith, the reason of statesmen, the reason of men of genius, popular reason, all is in brotherhood, fellow-citizenship, and harmony : if discords arise, the cause of them exists not in the elements of our constitution ; because that would be to suppose that our principle of life is contradiction. Now, contradiction is death ; and we have not been created dead, but living.

I approach the conclusion.

In all doctrine, intrinsically considered, I have already said, you will discover but two elements, error or truth : truth, which imparts worth to a doctrine ; error, which takes away from it that worth. Therefore, in order to explain the phenomenon of the antagonism of the human mind to Catholic doctrine, there are but two elements which we can possibly employ : error or truth. Now, I say that error does not explain that antagonism, or, if you like it better, cannot produce it ; for error does not produce rational certainty ; that is to say, a conviction reflected, sovereign, immutable : I have shown this in the last conference. Neither, in the second place, does error produce that deeply-seated and persevering repulsion which manifests itself among mankind with regard to Catholic



doctrine, because error flatters man, because he has never, in any time or place, shown such vigorous and persevering hatred to it as he has shown towards Catholic doctrine. Truth remains, then, as the cause of the antagonism which occupies our attention; and, in fact, truth should engender, on the one hand, certainty and love, but also the most obstinate repulsion. If man has an intelligent spirit, he has also a corrupted heart; he loves his liberty, his vices; he bears impatiently any condemnation; and as there is nothing purer in the world than Catholic doctrine, as it is holiness in the highest degree, it should naturally excite against itself repulsion as strong as the love which it inspires and which it obtains.

See, gentlemen, in two words, the solution of the problem: you have within you two poles, one turned towards truth, the other which is its antipodes. This is the meaning of Saint Paul, when he said that he felt in his being two men, the one conforming himself to the spirit of God, the other in revolt against Him. That which proves the truth of Catholic doctrine is not, then, simply the rational certainty which it commands, but also the repulsion which it engenders: if it had not produced these two contradictory phenomena, man being what he is, it would not be holy, true, divine. This is clearly proved, gentlemen, and I have no more to say. I am wrong: I have yet something to say to you, to you who, in this age and in this land of ours, have known and accepted truth, to you here present, who are the hope and the crown of the Church of God. O my friends! God alone knows your destinies; but whatever happens, first and before all, never be discouraged: Catholic Christianity is like Milo of Crotona upon his oiled disk; nothing will make it slip, no one will remove it from its place. When, then, you see the winds rising, and the clouds becoming black, remember that if your part is to prove the truth of the doc-



trine by the steadfastness of your adhesion and of your love, it is the part of your adversaries to prove it also, in spite of themselves, by the violence of their repulsion ; remember that it is the permanent meeting of these two movements, the invincible clashing of these two swords over the head of the Church, which form eternally her triumphal arch. And, in the second place, O my friends ! let your virtues be always greater and more apparent than your misfortunes, in order that posterity, which is the first judgment of God, in beholding you fallen, may find you like those soldiers who fall with their breasts towards the enemy, proving even in death, that they were worthy of victory, if it were the lot of courage and a right cause always to triumph.

## SIXTEENTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE ZEAL OF STATESMEN AND MEN OF GENIUS AGAINST  
CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,  
GENTLEMEN,

It appears to me that I ought to pass on, and no longer occupy my attention with the question which I treated before you last Sunday, since I have drawn from it in favor of Catholic doctrine, all the conclusions which were contained in it. I desire, however, to halt here a little longer for it is not an insignificant phenomenon that of the passions of men exciting, with regard to a doctrine, that repulsion which we see in the world with regard to Catholic doctrine. I can easily conceive that each man, taken singly, wounded in his pride and in his passions, might revolt against Christianity. But what will result from it? Partial revolts, protestations lost in the general respect of mankind. Vice will hide itself; it will even deck itself with the mask of truth, and will leave the mass of society like an army ranged in battle-array, to pursue its course without troubling itself with the obscure treasons which become lost in the general fidelity. As an army is not retarded in its march or in its designs by the cowardly hearts which beat under the arms of warfare; so also, if it were only a question of isolated repulsions, society would pass by, bearing along all that mire in its

billows, as a great stream bears along impure sands in its course, carrying us all towards the infinite in that ocean of life, of which Catholic doctrine is here below only the course and the motion.

But there is something more, gentlemen ; the war against Catholic doctrine is not a war carried on by isolated attacks, it is a civil war, a social war, and as that war is all the history of the last eighteen centuries, as it includes your destiny and that of your posterity, we must still halt here, and consider more profoundly that public zeal of statesmen and men of genius against Catholic doctrine. The question is grave, gentlemen, it is delicate. But comfort yourselves, I will treat you as Massillon treated Louis XIV. in the chapel of Versailles. Whatever may be your exigencies and my good will, I cannot do better for you than to treat you as the great age treated its great king.

One of the strongest passions of men, is the passion for power. Man not only wants to be free, he wants also to be master ; not only does he desire to be master of himself and of that which belongs to him, but he wants also to be master of others and of that which belongs to them. "The rage for dominion," said the illustrious Comte de Maistre, "is innate in the heart of man." And I blame him for that expression ; for the craving for power in man is not a rage, it is a generous passion. A man is loaded with all the gifts of birth and fortune ; he can live in the enjoyments of his family, of friendship, of luxury, of honors, of tranquillity ; he will not. He shuts himself up in a cabinet, he there heaps up, designedly, toils and difficulties. He grows hoary under the weight of affairs which are not his own, having only for recompense the ingratitude of those whom he serves, the rivalry of ambitions equal to his own, and the blame of the indifferent. The first child leaving the swaddling clothes of the school

takes a pen in his hand, and he who has but a shadow of talent at its dawn, who has no ancestors, has performed no services, to whom society owes nothing but the forgiveness of his temerity, he attacks the statesman ; who, instead of enjoying his fortune and his name, reserves to himself hardly time enough, between the disquiet of the morning and that of the evening, to drink a glass of water to quench his feverish thirst. The statesman does not heed these things ; he passes from his cabinet to fields of battle ; he watches by the side of the sword of Alexander to give his counsel ; he signs treaties of which the passions of men will require him to give an account before posterity. And at last he dies, his course shortened by his labors, by anxieties, and by calumny ; he dies, and his contemporaries engrave an epigram upon his tomb in anticipation of the time when the future might rise up in his favor.

Gentlemen, ambition may be a passion, I will not deny it, but at least it is a passion which demands energy, and, after the disinterested service of God, I know of nothing more heroic than the public service of the statesman. The Comte de Maistre ought to have said that "The want of power is innate in the heart of man." And why not ? Do you know the first words which were addressed to you when you left the hands of God ? Do you know what was the first benediction of mankind ? Hearken to it, son of Adam, and learn your greatness : "*Increase and multiply,*" it was said to the human race, when God spoke to it for the first time, "*Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth.*"<sup>1</sup> If such is your vocation, gentlemen ; if you have been called to govern the earth, as the celestial spirits have been called to govern the higher spheres, why should you

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, ch. 1, v. 23.

not have the ambition of your nature? That ambition has, without doubt, got into disorder; but, in fine, in its source it was the will of God and if it did not exist, mankind would perish. Therefore Christianity has never attacked human sovereignty.

From the beginning, the sons of Adam, divided into families, dispersed themselves upon the earth, and, in whatever way it might have been accomplished, they confided the sovereignty either to an assembly, or to a man, or to a race; and, by the constitution of sovereignty, families became elevated to the rank of nations or of states. The State!—is man in his highest power. The State!—is that moral force which sits upon the frontiers of nations, which guards their territory, by forcing respect from foreigners; the State!—is the protection of all rights and of all duties; it is the living justice which at each moment watches over millions of men, and does not permit a hair of their heads to fall with impunity; the State!—is the blood which has been shed during centuries by a people; it is its ancestry, its history, its victories, and its defeats; it is its banner without stain; for, even if it might have had them, we would never avow it; and it is our duty that the national banner should only be judged by God; the State!—it is the unity and solidity of a great human family. Ah yes! the State is a sublime and sacred thing, and Christianity has never touched it. It could have touched the heart of nations, justice, peace, glory, unity, ah! do not believe it! When it came it found human sovereignty dishonored by excesses, it found it prostrate in the midst of crimes; it has lifted it up again and purified it; it has anointed it in its temples by the hands of its pontiffs. It has held up Clovis upon the shield, by giving him lessons which awoke in the minds of nations, confidence, respect and love. It has created Christian loyalty, and with it fidelity, that sentiment which makes a child of



royal blood to be sacred in the eyes of a whole nation, and as devotion to God does not withdraw men from their devotion to the State, it has caused an ejaculation to rise from all hearts, which the poet has thus expressed :

“ Si mourir pour son prince est un illustre sort,  
Quand on meurt pour son Dieu, quelle sera la mort ! ”<sup>1</sup>

Christianity has, then, labored for the State; it has worked for human sovereignty, in the sight of God and the country; it has elevated the statesman higher than any doctrine had lifted him. And I feel sure that, but just now, when I commenced to speak, you understood even by my accent, whether or not I thought lightly of a great statesman.

And yet, gentlemen, the representatives and the organs of human sovereignty have often counted, and a large number still count among the adversaries of Catholic doctrine. What is the cause of this? By what error or by what ingratitude have they thus rewarded it? It is, gentlemen, because in recognizing, serving, and honoring human sovereignty, Catholic doctrine declares that it has limits, and that, at least, it is not more extended than the sovereignty of God. Now, God has in Himself a law, which is the limit, if we may so speak, of His omnipotence; that is to say, His justice, His goodness, His wisdom, which are Himself, do not permit that, in the exercise of His omnipotence, He can ever overleap the boundaries of that which is true, holy, and just. God is not only the living sovereignty, but He is also the living law, the eternal law, and He has given us an emanation of that law in the natural law and in the divine law. And these two laws, the unchangeable expression of the relations of all intelligent beings, to whom have they been confided from the beginning? Is it to human sovereignty, to the

<sup>1</sup> If it be great to die for one's king,  
What would it be to die for one's God!

State? No, gentlemen, never! The State has never been the depositary of the divine law and of the natural law. And who, then, from the commencement has held them in charge? Who! A great power, gentlemen, a power which is not subdivided like nations; a power which is spread from one end of the world to the other; a power which, like electricity, or like the loadstone, runs without interruption from one pole of humanity to the other—conscience! It is conscience which from the beginning was the depositary of the natural law and of the divine law, and which has always produced in the world the counterpoise to human sovereignty. But, before Christianity—or rather before Jesus Christ, for Christianity ascends to the cradle of all things—before Jesus Christ, the human conscience was weak; it had betrayed the trust which was confided to it; and what has Jesus Christ done? He has raised up the human conscience. He said to it one day, breathing upon it: “Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” He also said to it: “Fear not those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul; they shall bring you before deified human consciences, before kings, before presidents, they shall ask you questions; take no heed as to what ye shall say, for I will put words into your mouths, which no one shall be able to resist.” Jesus Christ has renewed conscience; He has given to it a power which it did not possess before; He has commanded it to obey God rather than men; He has armed it with martyrdom against human sovereignty degenerated into tyranny. “My soul belongs to God, my heart to my king, my body is in the hands of the wicked; let them do with me as they please.” This is the conscience placed in the world

by Jesus Christ—the Catholic conscience! It was not a priest who said this, but Achille de Harlay, the first president in the parliament of Paris. And neither was it to the profit of the priesthood that the spiritual power of conscience was raised up and reconstituted.

What have we gained by it? Before Jesus Christ, the priesthood, although dishonored by error, was honored, loved, borne in the arms of the empire. The pontifical colleges were composed of the most illustrious families of Egypt, of Greece, and of Rome; and if in those times a man had been found, who had dared to say of the heathen priesthood what is now said of the Catholic priesthood, the *fascies* of the republic would have opened of their own accord to overwhelm the profaner of the rights and of the guardians of the human conscience. But for us, Catholic priests, our lot is very different. We have been given that which they had not,—strength and grace to resist you. We have been given the sovereignty of conscience, with the command to shed even the last drop of our blood to defend it; and we have done so, we do so daily. We do more: martyrdom is a small matter; that which is more difficult, is to resist the powers which do not persecute, the desires of statesmen often worthy of the highest esteem, to struggle foot by foot, day by day, with them. Ah! when a priest would be quiet and enjoy this world, his course is very clear. Let him yield; let him retreat before human sovereignty; let him act on each exigency like a heathen priest, instead of acting like a Christian priest: distinctions, public piety, the renown of toleration, the favor of opinion will surround him, vying with each other to do him honor; and it would not require much skill even for him to hide his weakness, and keep up the appearance of pontifical and Catholic dignity. But let a poor priest preserve his conscience rather than his life, let him defend the entry into it against the efforts of human sovereignty,

then commences the grievous martyrdom of combating those whom we esteem, and whom we love, and of drinking the bitter cup of hatred so much the more unmerited, because we labor and suffer for those even who pursue us.

For, for whose benefit then has the power of conscience been instituted? For whose benefit? For yours, gentlemen; for the benefit of mankind. That natural and divine law, of which we are the guardians, and not the usufructuaries; the victims, and not the beneficiaries: that law contains your rights, your liberties, your eternal charter, even the essence of God, inasmuch as it is wisdom, justice, goodness; inasmuch as it protects you against your passions, and the passions of the whole universe. Ah! look, then, once in your lives, to the body of the Church, from that large wound which you see there, that cicatrice never dry, flows continually the most pure and persevering blood which has ever been shed for mankind.

Great God! Thou knowest these things, Thou who hast accomplished them, Thou knowest why Thou hast established the power of conscience at the same time as the power of human sovereignty. I pray Thee, then, in the presence of this great assembly, deign to extend Thy hand upon us; enlighten minds; teach them to understand where are the true defenders of their rights and of their most sure interests. Protect that work which Thou hast formed in the heart of nations; maintain the sovereignty of conscience with regard to human sovereignty; maintain the distinction between the temporal power and the spiritual power, from whence has come the civilization of the world. O God! protect Christianity! O God! save Christianity!

I pass on without transition to the zeal of men of genius against Catholic doctrine.

Genius is the greatest power which has been created by God, humanly speaking, for grasping at and receiving



truth. It is a sudden and vast intuition of the connections which bind beings together ; a limpid lake, in which God and the universe are reflected with as much of coloring as of clearness. It is also the faculty of rendering ideas visible to those who would not have discovered them by themselves, of incarnating them in striking images, and of casting them into the soul, with a sentiment which touches it by enlightening it ; which subjugates it ; which causes it to humble itself under that action of genius, and give itself up to it by something analogous to that which happens when love seizes upon us and commands us.

Thus, gentlemen, men of genius naturally hold the sceptre of ideas, as statesmen hold the sceptre of things. And, in reality, before the coming of Christ they exercised that empire almost fully ; they created fables, and those fables became gods. One day, a man of genius left his cabinet, and went to walk in his garden ; there he opened his mouth of gold ; young men like yourselves, eager to know, came to hear him, to surround him, to hang about his neck,—and behold the Platonists, the Peripatetics, the Stoics. Every man of genius had the pleasure of collecting around him intelligent men,—of forming a school from them, of governing them, in order to satisfy that spiritual ambition, which flatters more even than the ambition of kings. Men are born on a throne ; but although one may be born poet, philosopher, or orator, nature does not by these gifts at all exclude the necessity of advancing towards renown, and the honor of calling oneself the son of her works, and the father of her sovereignty. Nothing, without doubt, draws man nearer to the image of God, who has no cause, but who exists by Himself ; nothing, I say, renders man more like God, with regard to origin, than existing of himself, than forming himself, than having gained his name, than being able to say, “I owe myself only to myself.” And that want



of glory, that self-love, so much flattered by the position of the leader of a school, those effusions of pride, form the propensity of genius; like the horse of the Scriptures, which neighs at the sound of the trumpet, when the man of genius hears the rumor of ideas, his heart beats, his eye becomes bright, he rouses himself into action, and he creates: he pronounces a *fiat*! And as God takes pleasure in those armies of suns which He has ranged round His throne, genius takes delight in the systems which it evokes around itself; so that humanity may adore them, as formerly it adored the stars of the firmament. This is, doubtless, great pride; but let us not say too much against it; even when the man of genius wanders into error, let us pity him; let us remember that, when Plato condemned the poets to leave his city, he ordered that they should be crowned with flowers and conducted to the gates of the city, with the sounds of the lyre, in order to do honor to the ray of the divinity which was within them, whilst at the same time he would not accept their domination.

Now, gentlemen, we have broken this sceptre of ideas. Yes, let us confess it; for why should we hide it? Yes, we have broken this sceptre of ideas in the hands of men of genius. Since Christ, there are no more philosophical schools: Socrates, Plato, Zeno, and so many others, and their disciples, who, even centuries after their death, swore by their names, and did not venture to swerve from a single page which they had written, all that is no more; philosophy is become powerless to form schools, and to cause itself to be obeyed. Men ask themselves in Europe, where there exists a system of philosophy, a constituted school. They ask this, and obtain no answer. And yet you have great men. I do not say this ironically; yes, you have great men. Well! they are unable to found, I do not say a school existing for a thousand years, but a school which might last as long as their lives; they are

like dethroned sovereigns, wanting a place where their sheathed sword might believe itself at home. See, in addition, to whom the sceptre of ideas has been given, instead of to the men of genius. One day, Christ gathered together the fishermen who were casting their nets on the borders of a lake ; and another day He said to them : " Go and teach all nations ! " And again on another day those fishermen being together in a chamber, a breeze of wind passed over them ; they went out into the public squares, they spoke, they collected thousands of men together to hear their words, they shattered the edifice of Pagan science and religion ; and it is to those humble men, to the successors of those humble men, that the sceptre of ideas, the most elevated which can be held upon earth, has been given. A herdsman, a workman, who has, during his whole life, only handled wood or iron, watching his child at play in his workshop, exclaims, " I will make a prophet, an apostle of him. " He goes to the temple, he presents that child to the pontiff ; the pontiff receives him in his arms, rears him, gives to him the milk of the Gospel, and when he has grown, he one day prostrates him upon the floor in his temple ; he pronounces over him some mysterious words, he anoints his forehead and his hands with oil, and then he says to him ; " Son of the herdsman, stand up ; mount upon the throne of truth, speak to men, to kings, to nations ; fear nothing, for every authority bends before thy words ; bring down every high thing which lifts itself up against the knowledge of God ; nothing shall resist thee, if thou hast in thy bosom the faith and charity which thy Master had. "

Behold, gentlemen, a strange spectacle ; and do you not easily conceive that at sight of it these men of genius become indignant and say to us : You priests of Catholic doctrine, you think yourselves the sovereign lords of truth and of ideas ; but see, you have no learned amongst you ;

you have no authors; you have no orators. Where are your books? Here is the bulletin of bibliography: where is your name; if we meet with it by hazard, and ask the world who you are, the world passes by whistling like the wind, which only answers those who question it by laughing them to scorn.

It is true, gentlemen, it is just so; we have not much worldly wisdom; and when we have it, it is not the best thing which reaches us. We have not much of your wisdom; and why should we have it? Hearken, then, to Saint Paul: "*It is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; and the prudence of the prudent, I will reject. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*"<sup>1</sup> And Saint Paul, triumphant in the idea of our personal foolishness, exclaims again: "*See your vocation, brethren, that not many among you are wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong: and the mean things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and the things that are not, that He might destroy the things that are.*"<sup>2</sup> Where, indeed, would be the divinity of our mission, if we had knowledge other than the rest of the world, and by exception? If our books were, on each page, signed by the hand of genius, we should be nothing more than a human power. We must be men of no consideration, fools for Jesus Christ, because nations which possess good sense, and men of genius, who have enough of it when they wish, will then exclaim: "It is, however, very extraordinary, that these lowly men, after eighteen centuries,

<sup>1</sup> 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 1, v. 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 1, v. 26, and following.

should be masters of everything, and that we should be obliged to convoke the powers of the world to struggle against them !” I do not laugh at you, gentlemen, nor do I humble myself; but I am armed with the power which God has given to us in our weakness; and I rejoice in it. We alone are able to triumph without self-love, because our triumph does not come from ourselves.

But, in fine, to whose profit has the sceptre of ideas been transmitted from the strong to the weak, from the hands of genius to the hands of the Church? To the profit of whom, if not to the profit of mankind? The most precious treasure of man is truth; for truth is God made known; it is God diffusing himself into our minds, as light diffuses itself into our eyes. Now, powerful and creating genius adores itself much more than it adores truth. It is by no means a sure guardian of truth; it tends constantly to put even its own ideas in the place of the divine idea. God, considering then that the world had not willed, by wisdom, as Saint Paul said, to preserve truth—God has confided truth to the foolishness of faith; he has preferred faith, which is the worship of truth, the humble adoration of truth, to knowledge and genius, without excluding them, however, when they themselves desire to adore and to serve. He has preferred to descend into a vessel of wood, respectful and pure, rather than to remain in a vessel of gold, too often impure and rebellious. Yes; God has preferred the holy democracy of faith and charity to the proud oligarchy of genius. I thank Him for it from the bottom of my heart. I pray to Him earnestly that it may continue to be so, and that virtue may always here below be something greater and more powerful than genius.

Gentlemen, we celebrate to-night the anniversary of the Son of God, come in the simplicity and humility of infancy, and recognized by shepherds before being recog-



nized by kings. I invite you to this solemnity, which is a festival of the whole human family. That Child, born amongst vile animals, represents all mankind; it is the announcement that glory was taken away from man to be given to God, that we may receive, in exchange for it, peace. I desire for you, then, in the name of that birth, heart-felt peace; I anticipate it for you; I will pray that this affecting anniversary may touch your souls, and that you may repeat with the child Jesus those words, which sum up all that we have just said: "*I give thanks to Thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones!*"<sup>1</sup> Begin, gentlemen, to be little ones, humble and childlike, in order to become true men of genius, the preservers, the vessels of truth, and consequently, in order to co-operate in the establishment upon earth of duties, rights, liberties, and salvation; all founded upon the power given by Jesus Christ to conscience and to faith.

Enter, gentlemen, into that army of truth; God calls you from the midst of the world to eternal thoughts by many warnings. May this assembly, this spectacle, that attention which you accord to me, awaken you; and finally, may this night, which draws near to speak to you of God, be to you a good night!

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 11, v. 25.



## SEVENTEENTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE *SUPRA-RATIONAL* OR MYSTICAL CERTAINTY PRODUCED IN THE MIND BY CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

CATHOLIC doctrine produces then in the mind, at one and the same time, rational certainty and active repulsion. The power of doctrine is evidently the stronger, since, during so many centuries, it has resisted that persevering repulsion. But, gentlemen, is it the rational certainty of Christianity alone which has sustained it in this struggle? Is it that arm of flesh, that human and visible help, to which it owes its triumph over so many formidable enemies? Do not believe it, it is impossible; every doctrine which has but a rational support, which is defended only by reason, is a doctrine powerless, a doctrine lost, a doctrine dead, and, to say all in one word, is an academical doctrine.

I design, then, to-day to show you two things: the necessity for Christianity to possess a more extended and a higher certainty than rational certainty, and the existence of that certainty in a higher and more extended degree, to the profit of Catholic doctrine, and as the result of its action.

I have already said, that doctrine is the science of good and evil, the science of life. It appertains, then, by right,

to all that which lives, comprehending life; to all that which lives, being possessor of its life; to all that which lives, being able to regulate its life; that is to say, to all intelligent beings. But doctrine is of no value, is not a true guide, if it does not impart certainty; for a doctrine which does not impart certainty is a thread which breaks in your hands, like that thread which led astray rather than guided through the fabulous windings of the labyrinth. Now, rational certainty, a conviction, the result of reflection and learning, can evidently only serve a very limited number of men, capable of giving an account to themselves of the motives which caused their adhesion to a combination of ideas. Infants are unable to do this, and infancy is the commencement of humanity; all mankind passes its term in the cradle, and is humbled in swaddling-clothes which do not permit it to understand of itself the life of which infancy is the portico. On emerging from the state of infancy, which prolongs itself much more than we suppose, other wants take possession of us; it becomes necessary to gain our daily bread, we are all condemned to do this, and very few of us escape that law. Now, gentlemen, you are sufficiently advanced in experience to know what toils, what griefs, what bondage of thought it costs in that need of sustaining our actual existence, without counting those lives which depend upon our own; and that single consideration affords me the right to conclude that humanity is called to govern itself by motives of which it does not render to itself a scientific reason. Knowledge is the portion of a very small minority, and, in naming knowledge I do not mean the entire mass of human knowledge, but a simple branch detached from that vigorous tree. Very few enter into the sanctuary of knowledge even by one single door: what are we to look for when it is a question of a doctrine which grasps all and comprehends all?

Now Catholic doctrine, under the rational point of view has its roots in metaphysics, in history, in politics, and in the natural sciences : in metaphysics—by the study of God and of the soul, of spiritual substances, and of their relations with material substances ; in history—because it supports itself upon facts which have occurred in every epoch of the world, and which still become more fully developed every day ; in politics—since it has changed the face of society, and struggles continually against the social powers, which tend to limit its work ; in the natural sciences—since everything here below represents God, manifests God, speaks of God, and since there is not a tree growing by the water's side, not a grain of sand on the shores of the sea, not a star in the heavens, not anything that does not come from God, which does not go to God, which does not subsist by His power, and show forth His laws. So that Catholic doctrine is connected with all possible human knowledge, and it is necessary to touch all the points of that vast circumference in order to arrive at a rational certainty of Christianity. If you interrogate a metaphysician, an historian, a physician, a lawyer, he need only answer you with reference to his particular science ; for us, who represent the rational certainty of Christianity, we must answer all questions, from whatever branch objections might arise. It is the right of all to interrogate us about all ; it is our duty to satisfy all. And if we remain silent, I do not say that we betray doctrine ; but our silence would prove, at least, the difficulty of understanding it in its infinite development ; since even those who devote their lives to it may be sometimes, I do not say shaken in their conviction, but astonished, and obliged to wait for centuries for the inevitable answer which time brings always to truth. Would you then exact from the human race a science of this kind ? Gentlemen, it is too evidently incapable of it, and consequently, if Catholic

doctrine had no other support than rational power, it would perish, because, after all, the mass of mankind is composed of the ignorant multitude, and truth is destined for them as much as for you—more than for you, since souls, considered in themselves, are equal; and the greater number should necessarily turn the scale in the balance of God.

You will say to me: We agree to this, and God has also prepared for the ignorant an indirect rational certainty; that is to say, that being conscious of their helplessness, they trust to those who know, to the aristocracy, which is the depository of knowledge and of rational certainty. Well, gentlemen, if I should admit that—and I shall prove that it cannot be so—but if I should admit it, you forget that there exist upon earth two teaching authorities; an authority which affirms, which is the Catholic Church; and an authority which denies, which is that vast conjuration of minds of which I have shown you some traits in my preceding Conferences. So that the mass of the people, supposing it to be willing to trust to authority, is more embarrassed than ever; for it sees on one hand an admirable Church, a community of men, such as have been seen only there, who believe, who affirm, who baptize, who sacrifice themselves for their faith; it sees that grand spectacle of Catholic teaching explained, in prayer, by the temples; in language, by preaching; in life, by charity; in blood, by the blood shed in its witness; it sees that grand and heroic spectacle; but it sees also men who destroy the temples, who preach against the Church, who oppose philanthropy to charity, books to books, the schoolmaster to the pastor, the proselytism of unbelief to the proselytism of faith. Is it then easy for the people, the spectators of so frightful a war, to draw satisfactory conclusions, scientifically, and to discern philosophically, in that double echo which strikes continually upon their astonished ears, the voice which does not deceive them?



Two philosophers were crossing a stream in a bark ; they got into a quarrel upon certain points of metaphysics and religion. There was by their side a Capuchin, who appeared to be very attentive to their discussion. When they had arrived at their landing-place, the philosophers stood up and said to the monk : " Father, you have heard our arguments, which of us do you think has gained his cause ? " The Capuchin, having collected himself, said : " Gentlemen, I have listened to you with the greatest attention, and with the greatest pleasure, and if I must tell you what I think . . . . But do you desire me to tell you what I think ? " " Yes," cried the philosophers together. " Well, then ! I have not understood a single word of all that which formed the subject of your conversation."

Gentlemen, this Capuchin is the people, he is humanity with its coarse robe and cord ; humanity illiterate, poor, fatigued with toil, panting to gain a miserable subsistence. And you believe that God has placed its salvation at the mercy of all the logogriphes which have disturbed you during six thousand years ! Ah, I swear by the Divine goodness, that it is not so ; truth is not a sphinx which proposes enigmas to men, and devours the unfortunate who are unable to explain them.

And again, if the people should trust to a purely human authority—what ! gentlemen, there would then be two classes of men : one composed of those who would enter into direct communion with doctrine ; the other of those who would receive it second-hand : one who would see truth, who would talk with God ; the other who would see nothing but by man, who would only commune with man, who would receive only from man that truth which the learned would have meditated upon by the privilege of their birth. Ah ! gentlemen, that would then be a human faith, it would be what we call a moral certainty. Men would believe in Catholic doctrine as they believe in



the existence of Cæsar, because some have declared that Cæsar has existed. God and Cæsar would only produce the same certainty !

Moreover, if Catholic doctrine is true, if there is a religious doctrine in this world, ought the certainty of that doctrine to come from beneath us ? Is it necessary that man should scale the heavens, like Prometheus, to bear away the sacred fire ? Is it man who, with his means so limited, should snatch truth from the bosom of God, or is it God who should descend to seek him, to seize him, and bear him away ? Is it this saying of Christ which is true ; "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself ?*"<sup>1</sup> Or is it man who shall draw God to himself, like those rods which we place on the tops of our edifices to conduct the thunderbolt ? Ought we to inscribe on the pedestal of the statue of humanity communicating with God, that which has been inscribed on the base of the statue of Franklin :

Eripuit cœlo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis ?

Is Catholic doctrine the effort of human reason to arrive at truth ; is it a violent conquest gained from the sovereignty which is hostile to us, and which metes out to us sparingly the water and the bread of heaven ?

What ! God has shed upon the earth that which is necessary to our material nourishment with a profusion without bounds ; He has planted the woods and sown the harvests in infinite variety ; we have but to lower our hands, and gently push the plough, in order that the earth may be covered with its productions ; the sun rises every morning and sets every evening ; the rain ascends and descends ; the dew and the warmth succeed each other without interruption ; we have no need to enter into laboratories in order to extract from them the substances

<sup>1</sup> St. John, ch. 12, v. 32.

which are bountiful and beneficent ; they are at our feet, and require only a slight co-operation on our part, and even when we do not cultivate it, the earth is still often fertile. And when the nourishment of the mind is in question, and eternal salvation, you pretend that man is to do everything, and God nothing ; that it is the plough of our reason which marks our difficult and unfrequent furrows in the ground of virtue and truth ; and that nothing grows there but that which we have sown or rather created ourselves with great trouble ; you pretend that, bending over books during ages, we can only know algebraically that it is God who made the world, and who died for it ! It is not so, gentlemen ; truth is a mother who holds her children to her bosom, who gives them milk, who solicits their hunger, and asks but to nourish them ; and humanity is the child which has but to stoop in order to find life. Yes, there must be a divine road to truth, a road plain and easy ; yes, the sun of truth, rises and sets each day ; the rain of truth falls from heaven ; the wind of truth blows from east to west ; the mind which truth reaches does not conquer it—he is conquered by it ; he does not go to seek it first—it is truth which comes to him, embraces him, says to him : My son, I am thine, I ask from thee but one effort, and that is not to reject me !

I am then assured of it : there exists upon earth, with reference to Catholic doctrine, a certainty more extended, and higher than rational certainty. That certainty must be as wide as humanity, as high as the heaven, easy to obtain, like a God who loves, and is not sparing of His kindness. That certainty must be a conviction, not the result of learning ; for there is but one unlearned conviction, which is as wide as humanity ! and, although unlearned, that conviction must be transluminous ; for if it imparted no light, it would serve for nothing ; and if it imparted only human light, it would not be in proportion

with the divine world which it should reveal. In fine, that conviction must exclude doubt, because if it did not it would not be a certainty. Now, I affirm that Catholic doctrine produces in humanity such a conviction, and I proceed to show this. On another occasion I will inquire into the causes and the consequences of it.

Catholic doctrine does not wait until man may have reached the age of reason in order to take possession of him; that doctrine which inhabits the palaces of kings and its own palaces; which stands by the doors of the great tombs in which the consuls and the generations sleep, humbles itself even to the cradle of humanity, and, aiding the heart of the natural mother with its heart of a Divine Mother, it nourishes its children with the milk of the most profound truths. The child hears, he makes the sign of the cross which has saved the world, he believes in Jesus Christ.

Catholic doctrine, which persuades infancy, does not disdain to persuade the poor man; it approaches the workman, and says to him: My poor brother, thou art condemned to eat thy bread by the sweat of thy brow; thou wearest for thy vestment sackcloth, rather than a soft material woven by the hands of men, thy fellows; O dear humble brother, as said Saint Francis of Assisium, be content with thy lot. Hearken; behold truth comes to thee! it teaches thee that thou art the son and the brother of a God, that thou art the friend of God, that He is come from heaven for all, that He has given His blood for thee. O my poor lowly brother, thou art a sublime and sacred being; thou dost not know thyself; awake, see thyself, open the eyes of thy soul. Look not without upon thy body, which is nothing, but look within, and learn at once within thyself what a soul is that is made in the image of divinity. The Church persuades that poor man; a radiation from on high is produced within him;

his soul hears that which his reason does not hear ; he becomes an admirable being, a holy glory of God ; he believes, he loves ; he is ready to give his blood for God and his brethren ; he aspires to it, and whilst striking with his hammer upon his anvil, he fancies he feels the blows which the Saviour received ; and exclaims : How refreshing is the air ! How genial is the warmth of that fire ! The faith which has transformed his soul transforms also his toil.

Still lower than the people, in the wilds of history and of humanity, I meet with the uncivilized nations, a race enduring and strong, which knew only the reason of the sword. They were, however, subjugated by the influence of the Church ; her doctrine, so gentle and so pure, found the road to their hearts, and transformed them by a conviction in which knowledge assuredly had no part.

Will you go lower still, even to the point at which the intelligence decreases no more, so much is it at its lowest limit ? Behold us among the savage tribes. A priest makes open a way for himself in their forests, with a breviary, a cross, and a violin. After having prayed, he takes the instrument in his hands, and causes its chords to vibrate like an echo of the Divine reason ; he plays, the savages come out of their hiding-places ; they look on with eager eyes, they listen ; the man who plays cuts down a branch of a tree, he makes a cross of it, he fixes it in the earth, and mutilating upon his lips the remains which form their language, he says to them : Upon the cross which you see, a God was crucified for you ; fall upon your knees, adore Him, and be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Quit your arrows and your nakedness, and form a holy republic of brethren ; let each labor for the community ; sow, and plant, and reap for those who can neither sow, nor plant, nor reap. And lo, the admirable society of Paraguay rises into existence, that famous republic, in



comparison with which the republics of Athens and Rome were but states of slavery. I do not name its authors : when I pass before Saint Peter's, in Rome, and am asked who built it, I do not answer, for all the world knows that it is Michael Angelo Buonarrotti.

You see, gentlemen, Catholic doctrine produces everywhere, and under every variety of form, a conviction not the result of learning, in children, in the people, in barbarians, in savages. But even this is but a very insignificant phenomenon in comparison with that which I am about to show to you. Here is a learned man, who studies Catholic doctrine, who does not reject it with disdain, and who even constantly exclaims : You are very happy to possess faith ; I would fain be like you, but I cannot. And he speaks the truth—he would, and he cannot ; for unprejudiced study does not always make conquest of truth in order that it may be made clear that rational certainty is not the principal certainty upon which Catholic doctrine is based. This learned man, then, knows Catholic doctrine ; he admits its facts ; he feels its power ; he admits that a man existed who was called Jesus Christ, who lived and died in a wonderful manner ; he is moved by the blood of the martyrs, by the constitution of the Church ; he will admit, without hesitation, that it is the greatest phenomenon which the world has seen ; he almost says : It is true ! And yet he does not determine ; he feels himself oppressed by truth, just as we are oppressed in a dream, in which we see without seeing. But, some day, this learned man falls upon his knees ; he feels the wretchedness of man, he lifts up his hands towards heaven, he exclaims : From the depth of my wretchedness, O my God, I cry to you ! At that moment something passes within him ; scales fall from his eyes ; a mystery is accomplished ; behold him changed ! He is become a man meek and humble of



heart ; he may die, he has made conquest of truth ; he is like ourselves ; and what has made him like us ? A power which is not rational power ; for he perished by the power of reason, he is raised up again by another power.

Thus the phenomenon of conviction, not the result of learning, is not only produced in the poor and the ignorant, but also in the learned. But what is this conviction, which is not the result of learning ? Is it not simply the teaching authority of the Church, which subjugates souls ? I answer, No. It is an error to suppose that a Catholic, even an ignorant one, understands nothing of that which he believes, and that he bends his head simply under the authority of the Church, without any other motive of adhesion. This is erroneous, in principle as in fact. In principle we do not say : I believe in God and in Jesus Christ, because the Church so believes ; but, I believe in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Catholic Church herself, because God believes in it, wills it, says it, and knows it. And if, before possessing the Divine certainty of the infallibility of the Church, we had faith in her teaching, our faith would be but a human act, our certainty but a human certainty. In principle, that supposition is, then, erroneous. Here is the act of faith : “ My God, I believe in all that which Thou hast revealed, and which is proposed to us by Thy Church, because Thou art truth itself, and Thou canst neither deceive Thyself nor us.” The chief motive of faith is the veracity of God ; the veracity of the Church is but the secondary and derived motive. In virtue of the act of faith, leaning upon the Divine veracity, I exercise an act of faith in the veracity of the Church, whose authority emanates from God.

In the second place, and in fact, that which passes within us, when we believe, is a phenomenon of inward and superhuman light. I do not say that external things do not act for us as rational motives of certainty ; but the

act itself of that supreme certainty, of which I speak, affects us directly, like a luminous phenomenon : I say more : like a transluminous phenomenon. For Catholic doctrine appears to us still to be more evident than any other doctrine, even than natural doctrine : we feel for it that which we do not feel for other doctrines. With regard to it, we are acted upon by a light which I cannot better designate than by calling it transluminous ; as we say transatlantic, to name the regions beyond the Atlantic seas. If it were otherwise, how could there be proportion between our adhesion, which would be natural and rational, and an object which surpasses nature and reason ? By virtue of natural evidence, I can readily admit phenomena, causes, and laws, which are within the reach of my reason ; I can readily establish, between my natural light and natural objects, a connection which produces rational certainty ; but I cannot establish a proportion between natural light and a superhuman object. Now, wherever there is no proportion between the light of the intelligence and the object of that light, there is no certainty ; for certainty supposes a proportion between the intelligence and its object ; and it is metaphysically absurd to say that, between a limited intelligence and an object without limits, any proportion can be established.

I declare, then, and we Catholics all declare, that we are struck by Catholic doctrine, not as by darkness, but as by light ; not as you would be on entering into a dark vault, but even as on entering into a place full of light and radiance ; into an immense edifice, without bounds and of which we do not see all the proportions, of which we do not calculate all the dimensions, but of which the glory seizes us, and transports us beyond ourselves. And this it is which causes us to feel so much devotion for these incomprehensible things, the result of so absolute a certainty that it excludes every kind of doubt.

For this is the third character of Catholic conviction, even that which is not the result of learning—it excludes doubt. From the moment when the Christian has faith, it is impossible for him to doubt. Men may, it is true, lose faith, and even this is a phenomenon which is accomplished with difficulty, and which is seldom accomplished except in youth; but, in fine, from the moment when the illiterate conviction produced by Catholic doctrine exists, it is impossible to doubt. If that doubt existed, you would know it, it would be manifest to you, you would feel the heart of the Catholic and its language wavering; but, say, are we men who endeavor to teach you certain truths above the common order? I appeal to you, you have seen Catholics; are we men of doubt? Moreover, what is the question? We Catholics bear witness to the phenomena which occur within us; you are free to disbelieve us, to want hearing and discernment. I will not, and I cannot force you; but I say again: We feel no doubt, and we prove it by our conduct during life, and at the hour of death! Do you find the people, who hear the language of the Church affirming on the one side, and your language denying on the other, do you find them hesitating? Is the child who receives his first communion troubled by the fear of being deceived? You move heaven and earth against children, peasants, soldiers, women; knights of error, armed from head to foot, you mount your barbed and caparisoned steed, and enter the lists against the lowest order of humanity: Do the Christian people pay attention to you? They pass on their way, they travel on towards eternity without looking towards you, without hearing or heeding you.

Is this doubt, or is it a certainty which is not the result of learning, and transluminous? For if it were only a luminous certainty, that poor laborer, that child, that maid-servant, could answer you and they do not. You talk to

them of metaphysics and of history; you say to them: It is the Church which has made you slaves, you are by nature sovereign; the Church has made you poor, you are by nature rich; the cause of your hunger is the Church; of your thirst, the Church; of your tattered garments, the Church; of your miserable bed, the Church; your wife is dying—the Church is the cause of it; all your sufferings are occasioned by the Church; and you do not perceive it! If, at least, you had addressed yourselves to me, I could have answered you; but those poor people, what do you expect them to say to you, if they only possess their knowledge and their reason? Happily, and thanks be to God for it, they possess a divine light, before which yours is as nothing; they feel regarding you that which men feel when they see before the sun a blind man who blasphemes against it. We see the sun of eternal truth, and your words against it do not even enter into our ears: they are the whistling of the herdsman before the roaring of the sea.

There exists then, gentlemen, an unlearned conviction produced by Catholic doctrine, a transluminous conviction, which also excludes doubt; a genuine certainty, which is not a rational certainty, since it is intuitive, not founded upon evidence and reasoning; a degree of certainty which cannot be lost to mankind, although it may be lost to individuals.

I know that you contest with us the impossibility of its being lost to mankind and that, being powerless against its past history, you prophesy against its future. Gentlemen, the future is a very uncertain thing, and when men have the past against them, I very much fear, to tell you the truth, that they will have the future also against them. When an institution has existed eighteen centuries, having intercourse with time, with knowledge, and liberty; when knowledge has tried every effort against you, and



liberty also, without destroying you ; it is demonstrated that knowledge, liberty, and time, will be unable to do more against you in the future.

In fine, we have existed till now. On this very day Christ counts another year ; yet a few hours, and the knell of eternity, sounding in the ears of men, will have said to them—Christianity is a year older.

And in this year, as in preceding ones, you have combated against us without having triumphed over us ; we breathe still. If we look back a little farther, even to the commencement of this century, we shall be led to admire that which Providence has done for us. Then this temple was closed, these altars were overthrown, this place was deserted ; and see, after forty years of liberty, of knowledge, and of the course of time, these doors are open, these altars are standing, and you, gentlemen, by your immense assembly, gladden these old walls, which have seen so many men, and which wonder to behold them now more numerous than ever. I prophesy also then, and I give you rendezvous, even here, in forty years. Your smile, gentlemen, warns me that I shall not be here. It is true I am your senior, and I thank God for it ; since it is that right of primogeniture which permits me to teach you, and to open my heart to you. But, in fine, you will be here in forty years ; God will grant that time to you to prove His strength and your weakness. Observe, then, the movement of human knowledge and human liberty ; set down in your memory the attacks to which we shall be subject from one end of the world to the other ; and that done, see, when the day arrives, how things stand for us and for you.



## EIGHTEENTH CONFERENCE

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OF THE CAUSES OF THE SUPRA-RATIONAL OR MYSTIC CERTAINTY PRODUCED IN THE MIND BY CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

I DESIRE to-day to examine into the causes of the supra-rational or mystic certainty produced in the mind by Catholic doctrine, and to resolve the objections which are made against it, as I have done with regard to those which are made against rational certainty.

Phenomenon means apparition: men, in spite of all their pride, have adopted this word to express that which presents itself to their interior and exterior vision, being convinced that they are like phantoms which move upon a stage, having behind them a power which impels them and puts them in motion. And, in fact, it is very certain that that which begins and that which ends, that which enters and that which goes out, is not something which subsists of itself, but a passing reality, which hides behind itself a more profound reality. This is why man, whenever he has seen a phenomenon, has concluded that it had a cause; so that it is an axiom of the human mind, that there is no phenomenon without cause. And since there exists a mystic certainty, which I have called an illiterate and transluminous conviction, which excludes doubt, that

certainty has necessarily a cause. Now, according to another axiom of the human mind, every phenomenon is in proportion with its cause, that is to say, the properties contained in the phenomenon are contained in the cause by some means or other : for, if the cause did not contain the properties of the phenomenon, although, perhaps, in a more eminent degree, it would not have been able to produce it ; the cause is the power which produces the phenomenon ; and consequently, since there is a mystic certainty, there is a mystic power in the world, and we shall know what that mystic power is by again observing the phenomenon of mystic certainty.

We said that mystic certainty is an illiterate conviction ; mystic certainty is then a power capable of producing conviction, without the help of reasoning and of knowledge. And as that illiterate conviction excludes doubt, that is to say, arrives to the highest state of conviction, it follows that the mystic power which produces it is capable of imparting a conviction of the highest degree, without literature, without knowledge, without reasoning, without a word. In fine, as that conviction is transluminous, as I have shown it to be, we must necessarily conclude that the mystic power is capable of imparting, without the help of literature, reasoning, or knowledge, a light which surpasses that of literature, reasoning, and knowledge. This we have proved or else you will deny the phenomenon of mystic certainty : but if you adopt this phenomenon of a conviction which does not come from reasoning, from literature, or from knowledge, it must necessarily come from somewhere. I will ask you to account for it to me, and if you do not admit the mystic power, such as Catholic doctrine establishes it, you must admit another power producing the same effects, which comes to the same thing.

But what does this show ? A light which reaches our minds without literature, without science, without reason-

ing—is that possible? Do we comprehend it? Ah! even if we did not comprehend it, I should not disturb myself about it for a moment: I should still say, there is in the world, with reference to Catholic doctrine, a conviction unlearned, transluminous, and which excludes doubt; there is then a cause which includes similar properties, and which acts upon the mind of man: but we have no difficulty in proceeding further.

Do you believe, in effect, that God sees things as we see them? Do you believe that God, who is substantial and total light, proceeds, like ourselves, in a purely rational manner, laying down principles and deducing consequences therefrom, and then going back again from consequences to principles; which forms what we call intelligible light, rational light, logical light, natural light, philosophical light—the name matters little? No: by a look, single and simple, God sees all; He knows all, Himself and all that which may spring from Him, and when, from the high height of His eternal abode, He sees beforehand that which will some day happen, in myriads of centuries, His eye does not dilate; His eyebrow, more powerful than that of the Jupiter of Homer, does not move: He follows the succession and the change of created things by an immovable look. Well, then! why should we not be, to a certain degree, partakers of that supra-rational, supra-intelligible light—for we must create words to express these ideas, and, after all, I do not even create them—of that light, which is that of God? Why should not God, who has made man capable of seeing by principles and consequences, be able to distribute to him a certain degree of His own light for certain objects, and to a great end? Why should not man, who has the rational power of deduction and of induction, possess also the power of intuition? You possess that power, gentlemen, for so many things inferior to those which we are now considering. Intuition, that internal

vision, beyond principles and consequences, is the very power of the human intelligence. Shall we give you some examples of this?

You all know presentiments; whether you adopt them or not it matters little, it is an historical fact; if you have not had them, I hope that you will have them some day. A presentiment—what is it? You are alone in your house—a feeling of sadness seizes upon you—you ask yourself why? You examine yourself; you are the same as you were before. Your affairs are in a good state; you are pleased with yourself, which is a thing too easy, and yet you are sad! Some days after, you hear that at that time of your sadness, without apparent cause, you were deprived of a friend—of a near relation: how did you know it? It is not by the course of principles and consequences, by inductions and deductions; you knew it by a secret and an inexplicable induction, by a light superior to that of logic.

You meet some one for the first time; you know nothing of his life, of his origin, his genesis, of his good or bad actions; you regarded him as Jesus Christ regarded the young man in the Gospel, of whom it is written: “*Looking on him, he loved him*;”<sup>1</sup> you are touched by the soul expressed in that physiognomy; you love it; a sympathetic intuition places between you, in one single instant, that which logic would not have placed there in years.

And battles—military genius! When a general has two hundred thousand men behind him, and two hundred thousand men before him, in the midst of the smoke, across those masses which pass and clash against each other; when he receives only communications half-broken by the death of those whom he looked for, all at once he feels, as Bossuet said in the funeral oration of the Prince of Condé, a sudden illumination; there is an intuition he gives a

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark, ch. 10, v. 21.



final order, and retires to take rest, certain that all is over.

You are a lover of art—you wish to create upon canvas; will you seek for mathematical instruments in order to group your personages and make them life-like? You can do this; but you will not, fearing to create only a mechanical work—a dead body; because, instead of seeing, you will have calculated.

You write: you would speak of hell; you say like Bossuet: “*Là commence ce pleur éternel!*”<sup>1</sup> You commit a barbarism; but every French ear listens and admires. The grammar is against you; but, men of genius, you have seen your language is moved with regard to you; it has opened its resources, and a divine expression has come from them—for all intuition is divine; it falls from the throne of Him who sees all without ever combining anything.

If it be so in the natural orders for all kinds of genius and of discoveries; if all that which is great upon the earth is found, as Christopher Columbus found the New World, by the power of intuition, judge of what it should be, when it is a question belonging to the eternal order, to the shoreless seas of the future world; when, in fine, it concerns steering towards God! Shall not God have given us a divine intuition for this great work of life, a light which proceeds without composition or decomposition? For between rational light and mystic light there is the difference between the light which is decomposed in the prism, and a purer light which could not be decomposed there.

Let us, then, again conclude, that since there exists a mystic certainty—that is to say, a conviction, unlearned, transluminous, and which excludes doubt, there necessarily exists also a mystic power, or light, which is capable of producing that conviction.

<sup>1</sup> “There commences that eternal tear.”



But, gentlemen, that mystic power alone would be unable to explain the phenomenon of mystic certainty ; for it is not enough for a power to exist in order to produce its effect ; it must place itself in connection with the being in whom it should be produced ; and it can only place itself in connection with that being in proportion as it finds within it something corresponding with itself. I speak to an animal—he does not understand me ; what does he stand in need of ? It is not on the side of language that anything is wanting : said to man or to an animal, it is still the same thing. Why, then, does not the animal understand it ? It is because he wants an internal organ corresponding to the language, because he has no rational organism. It is necessary, then, in order that there may be mystic certainty, that there should be in man not only a mystic light, but also an organic structure which might be affected by the mystic light, otherwise that light would fall upon us in vain ; then, logically, there is not only a mystic light, but an organic structure susceptible of divine intuition ; and man—this is our first conclusion—man, according to Aristotle, is a religious animal.

Man is a religious animal, because he has a religious or mystic organism, as he is a rational animal because he has a rational organism, and as he is an animal in all the reality of the term, because he has a physical organism. Thus, when I take you by the hand, and you have the kindness to press mine in return, I address myself to your physical organism ; when I produce an argument by which your intelligence is enlightened, I address myself to your rational organism ; but when I say to you : Reflect seriously upon thyself, look back upon thy life, fall upon thy knees and confess thy sins ; I address myself to your mystical organism. Such language is absurd for your physical organism ; and even for your rational organism ; but

it corresponds with your mystical organism, and that is why you confess your sins ; for if it were not so, heaven and earth might fall upon you before you would bend your knees before another man to avow your faults.

Man is, then, a religious animal—a mystic animal ; and when he resists religion, and when it happens that he is no longer affected by it—is he an imperfectly organized man, physically or rationally ? Not the least in the world ; but his mystic organism is feeble or perverted, he has blunted it ; for it is more easy to blunt the mystic organism, than the intellectual organism, on account of its greater delicacy ; and it is a prodigy that we can still so easily touch that organism, and draw some sounds from it, when we know man and the imperious voice of his passions. The goodness of God must be very great towards him, or his religious organic structure must have been divinely tempered and restored.

As the consequence of that which precedes, I add, that man, being a religious animal, religion is necessarily true. For how could it be that our nature is false ? How could any real force be false ? Neither is an organic structure false, nor a power, although they may be liable to be perverted. All that which exists independently of us is true ; and in the same way as electricity is true because there are electric phenomena, so, because there are mystic phenomena, the mystic power is true also ; and as the physical organism and the rational organism are true because there are physical and rational phenomena, so the mystic organism is true by the same title. These consequences are manifest : how are they sought to be avoided ? This we shall presently see.

You can easily understand the embarrassment of our adversaries. If I had found on the summit of the Alps a marvellous drop of water, containing unknown properties, and I had brought it among our learned societies, all

Europe would be excited : the water would be placed under lock and key ; commissioners would be named, who would meet together during several months ; men would meet each other in the street, and ask each other : Have you heard the news ? What ? What is it ? There has been received at the Academy a drop of water which had never before been heard of. And there would be reason for it, gentlemen ; for a single drop of water is a divine wonder ; and all the princes of science are not too many for the task of examining it. It is a creation of God ; which speaks of God, and teaches something of God. And on this account, when I speak of those *savants*, who meet together for such an object, it is not with any intention of mockery or derision ; the Scriptures did not mock when they declared of Solomon that he had examined everything, from the cedar of Lebanon, even to the hyssop ; from the most humble plant growing in the crevice of a ruin, even to those trees which adorn the palaces of kings ; and which, all dead as they are, preserve under the gold and the sculpture a kind of immortality. But if I have not the right to ridicule the labors of science over a drop of water, I have the right of asking, when it concerns phenomena like those of mystic certainty, when it is a question of millions of reasonable beings admitting a conviction as a principle of their existence, I have, I say, the right to ask you not to pass on, without halting, before this phenomenon. For, if a material phenomenon is important, how much more so should a human phenomenon be, a social phenomenon—more even than social, for it does not appertain to a single people, but to all nations ? I have the right, and it is my duty to ask you to be attentive, and to deign to explain this to me. And as it is more easy to deny than to explain, you have immediately commenced by denying. It is always the first impulse of unbelief.

But can the great mystic action which we have signalized in humanity be denied? Is the phenomenon of the conviction unlearned, transluminous, and which excludes doubt, a fact, or is it not? Are there, or are there not, thousands of men who affirm it, and who say: I adhere to, I believe in, Catholic doctrine—not by the faith of the learned, but by that of the people. Let us even leave the external proofs of the sincerity of their conviction, which they give, namely: their lives regulated in accordance with that conviction; which certainly is not a small thing, when so many are seen who sacrifice their convictions to their lives. I only say—behold a testimony of eighteen hundred years! behold millions of men, living and dead, who feel, or who are convinced that they feel as I have said! What do you think of it? What say you of it?

Your resource—will it be to accuse us of falsehood and of hypocrisy? But what! have you, then, had no Christian mother, who has borne you in her womb and in her arms? no Christian sister, no Christian wife or daughter? Have you no Christian friends? What? has a Christian mother never shown you Jesus Christ in her heart? What! has the kiss of friendship never made you feel a Christian respiration? Has no soul-breathing word, during eighteen centuries, ever fallen from the lips of Christianity upon you? No, you cannot oppose to us that reason of hypocrisy; it would be a parricidal reason. . . . Ah! you believe in your mothers, your sisters, your wives, and your daughters, and in your friends; you believe in their virtues; you love them; you admire them; you say of them, like Polyeucte of Pauline:

“They have too many virtues to be insincere!”

Regard simply an act of conversion; see, I pray you, one of those men suddenly become Christian; go to him; ask him what has passed in the depths of his soul. He will say to you: I have read, I have reasoned, I have de-



sired, and I have not attained : and one day, without my being able to tell you how, at the corner of a street, by my fireside, I know not, but I was no longer the same—I believed ; then I read again, I meditated, I confirmed my faith by my reason ; but that which passed within me at the moment of final conviction is of a totally different nature from that which preceded, or from that which followed it.

It is the history of Jesus Christ after His resurrection. Do you remember those two disciples who went to Emmaus ? Jesus Christ accosted them ; they did not know Him. He said to them : “ *What are these discourses that you hold with one another as you walk, and are sad ?* ” “ *Art thou alone a stranger in Jerusalem,* ” said one of them to Him, “ *and hast not known the things that have been done there, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet, mighty in work and word, before God and all the people : and how the chief priests and rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him ; but we hoped that it was He who should have redeemed Israel ; and now, to-day is the third day since these things were done ; yea, and certain women of our company affrighted us, who, before it was light, were at the sepulchre ; and not finding His body, came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, who say that he is alive.* ” “ *O foolish and slow of heart to believe !* ” said Jesus to them, “ *ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into His glory ?* ” And then He began with Moses, David, and Isaiah, and expounded to them all the prophecies. Notwithstanding, they did not yet know Him. They reached Emmaus, and sat down to eat. Then Jesus Christ left the rational power, He made the sign of the Cross, He blessed the bread, and gave it to them to eat ; at that moment their eyes became open, and they knew Him ; they

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, ch. 24, v. 17, and following.



resisted the rational power, they yielded to the mystic power.

Since then the phenomenon cannot be denied, it must be explained. How is it to be explained? It is said to us: "Well! let it be so, we admit the phenomenon; but you yourself admit that it is not a rational phenomenon." How can we argue about a thing which is called by its very champions irrational? You say that a phenomenon occurs within you; let whatever you like pass within you, it is your own affair, but that does not fall within the domain of reason; it is foolishness, weakness of mind, and, whatever it may be, it cannot be a subject of discussion.

I show you here one of the most profound tactics of unbelief.

A few years ago, a little book fell into my hands; its object was to explain, without however introducing other arguments, all that which was necessary for a Catholic to know and make clear in order to possess a rational certainty of Catholic doctrine. Before reaching the twentieth page, the mind was seized with a kind of dimness; one exclaimed: But, great God, is it possible that it is needful to study so many questions, to obtain a rational certainty of Christianity? Where was the skill of that tactic? To separate in the mystery of faith, the rational power from the mystic power, the right wing and the left wing of truth, so as to be able to combat each separately; for each, taken separately, is unable to resolve the whole difficulty. In fact, if we propose to our adversaries the rational power of doctrine, they say to us: But consider then all mankind, women, children, the ignorant; how are they to solve these questions? And thus they conclude that the immense majority cannot attain to rational certainty. If, on the contrary, we propose to them the mystic power, they say to us: It is not a rational power;

it is only fit for little children, it is a weakness of mind. In consequence, on the one hand it is too much, on the other too little. Therefore we do not accept this division of our forces, and we say: If the faith of Bossuet is not a feebleness of the mind in Bossuet, it is no more a feebleness of mind for the child, for the workman, for the ignorant. I see plainly that the child, the workman, the ignorant attain to faith by another road than Bossuet, but what does that prove, if not that there are two roads to truth? It is the truth, and not the roads to it, which decides whether there is any feebleness of mind. Well, then, you cannot regard that truth which was admitted by Bossuet, and consecrated by his genius, as a feebleness of the mind; and by that alone, whatever be the road by which it is reached, we are strong with it, and made so by it. Whether you ascend by the grand staircase, or by a secret one, to enter into the palaces of kings, what matters it? When I am at the Tuileries, by whatever way I might have arrived there, I am in the halls of the kings of France. I am in a splendid and an exalted place. Just so, whether I, a man of the people, may have arrived at truth by the right hand or by the left, do not insult me; for the entire majesty of Christianity overshadows and protects me; if my personal armor is not well tempered in appearance, that of my fathers and my brethren has glowed in the fires of Damascus, and will know how to answer you.

Do not separate, then, gentlemen, those which should not be separated—the rational power and the mystic power; they are the two buttresses of one and the same arch. This temple, in which I speak to you, has exterior walls and interior walls, and an interior space; he who would separate them would destroy the whole; there is no longer within where there is no without. Take not away the walls in order that the interior may remain; take not away the interior in order that the walls may have a reason for re-

maining standing. There is a soul and there is a body in the Church; the body is the rational power, the soul is the mystic power. The body is a corpse without the mystic power, and the mystic power is something imaginary and incomprehensible when it is without a body, or a rational power which manifests it and proves it. It is by this that we shall again answer a last objection. All religions, they say, might, in their favor, lay claim to that mystic power which you take advantage of. Had not the heathens any mystic power? Have not the Christian sects any mystic power? If the mystic power argues for you, it does the same for all, because all the world is at liberty to boast of it.

Let us first commence with heathens. If I should admit and I do admit it, that there was a mystic power in the heathen religions, what inference would you be able to draw from it? Yes, a mystic power breathed under the shameful veil of paganism; men had dishonored the primitive worship, they had heaped upon it monstrous ideas and practices; but, in fine, since they wished to abandon the divine worship, why did they not destroy all worship? Why paganism and not nihilism? For, in fine, if the mystic power is but a chimera, what then induced those who wished to free themselves from God to preserve some traces of it? How should paganism have resisted nihilism? Modern incredulity desires to accomplish a work which the Briareus of heathen antiquity could not perform! Ah! you think you will succeed in destroying mystic power in the world! It is as if you desired to destroy the electric power or the magnetic power, which governs the magnetic needle. Paganism has labored at this work as much as it was possible; but even in the midst of its darkness, as Tertullian remarks—in sickness, in afflictions, a heathen spoke of God and exclaimed: O my God! and in his joys: Oh! how good God is! O heathen, said Tertullian, who

told thee that? Is it in thy temples, by thy oracles, that thou hast learned to speak thus? Thy inspiration comes from elsewhere; it is the testimony of a soul naturally Christian; that is to say, in which the mystic power had not lost its action.

That which remains to be said on the subject of paganism may be inferred from that which I shall say of the Christian sects.

I am in America, in a great assembly; a woman stands up and says: My brethren, I am inspired by the Holy Ghost. The man of good sense answers her: Before I listen to you who speak in the name of the mystic power, prove to me your rational power. Jesus Christ, who was quite as good as you, took the trouble to perform miracles to establish the divinity of His mission, and to give a guarantee of the mystic power which He dispensed. Do the same and I will listen to you. The question of the rational power is prejudicial to the question of the mystic power. Thus, when Protestants talk to us of the interpretation of the Scriptures, by the help of the Holy Ghost, given to all individually, we oppose to them the want of unity in their individual interpretations; the rational power necessary to unity is wanting to them, it is as useless for us to apply ourselves to the rest, as it is useless to think about a building which wants only the walls.

Two words, gentlemen, and I have done. The Church has produced in the world, by means of the rational power and the mystic power, an edifice, the exterior and interior of which mutually support each other, and answer to all the wants of mankind. This is what Saint John saw in the isle of Patmos, where he was exiled for the faith. He heard, in one of his trances, a great noise, and turning round, he saw, in the midst of appearances which he describes, the Son of Man, having a two-edged sword which came out of His mouth. That two-edged sword is

the living image of the double power upon which Jesus Christ has founded His Church. The sword which has been given to us is double ; on one side it combats the learned and the vain-glorious by the rational power ; and on the other it gathers in the lowly, the ignorant, and the learned themselves, by the mystic power. Yield, gentlemen, yield to the touch of that sword, the single hilt of which is in God, and the double point everywhere.



## NINETEENTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCED IN THE MIND BY CATHOLIC  
DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

WE have established the fact that Catholic doctrine takes possession of the human understanding by a double power, which produces a double certainty: by rational power, which produces a rational certainty, that is to say, a conviction reflected, sovereign, immutable; by mystic power, which produces a mystic certainty, that is to say, a conviction unlearned, transluminous, and which excludes doubt. One of these powers is visible, and fills the world with its glory; the other is invisible, and fills the souls of Christians with its powerful and irresistible phenomena. These lean one upon the other: the visible power manifests itself to those even who do not desire to perceive it, and the invisible power inwardly sustains all that edifice, as the mathematical power, which is invisible, sustains an external work of architecture. There is nothing in the world which is not at the same time visible and invisible, and, when mystic power is attacked, by the same action mathematical power is also reached. For, after all, who has seen mathematical power, who has touched it, who

has laid hold of it, other than in the interior support which it lends to our exterior constructions?

It is a great thing, gentlemen, to hold humanity by two powers, the one visible, the other invisible; by two certainties, the one rational, the other supra-rational; and, nevertheless, this is not yet enough; for man adheres to certainty only because he adheres to knowledge. Certainty is a simple quality of knowledge. A certainty, although perfect, may be of very little importance, if it has not behind it knowledge which has a great object. Man desires to know, and, consequently, Catholic doctrine should take possession of his understanding by knowledge. Knowledge is the perception of existences, and of their relations. To see that which is, to see the ties which exist between all the things which are, is to know, and knowledge is the more meritorious in proportion as it has more extent, more depth, and more light. I pass, then, from the phenomenon of Catholic certainty, by a natural and necessary transition, to the phenomenon of Catholic knowledge. I shall examine the state of human knowledge and the state of Catholic knowledge. I shall show, in the first place, that human knowledge wants extent, depth, and light; I shall show, in the second place, that Catholic doctrine is clear, profound, and extended.

Mark attentively, gentlemen, the position of the question. We do not now inquire if Catholic doctrine is certain, and, consequently, if it is true; I have already proved this, not fully, by giving all the proofs which I might have advanced; but, in fine, I have proved this, and this was my first duty. For when any doctrine whatever is in question, the first step is to ascertain if it be certain or not certain, if it be true or false. I am now treating of Catholic knowledge, and whilst I am arguing this question, I pray you not to oppose to me the question of certainty, which I look upon as decided. I cannot

treat two questions at the same time ; I cannot show you, at the same time, the degree of certainty and the degree of knowledge for which the mind is indebted to Catholic doctrine. The degree of certainty is established ; I start from it as from a base ; without this I have labored in vain. The certainty being then supposed, I examine that which Catholic doctrine teaches us, and when I shall show its light, its depth, its extent, you will not be entitled to oppose to me the question of its certainty, since that is a question determined.

The first quality of knowledge is extent. The mind of man is so constituted, that when it acquires a certain degree of knowledge it does not stop there, but desires to get beyond it. As they say of Alexander that from his youth he dreamed of the conquest of the universe, so the mind of man has scarcely awakened to the light of truth, has hardly caught a glimpse of existences and of the relations between them, but on the instant it grasps the universe as its domain, it desires to penetrate into it, to conquer it. The reason of this is plain : our mind is a light, light desires to unite itself to light, and if you had poured into that cup for centuries, it would still exclaim : It is not yet enough ! Moreover, all existences being linked to each other, you can very well conceive that when I have discovered a relation between two existences, that relation which is manifested to me will cause me to perceive another, either in the ascending or the descending scale. It is a chain, and as long as I have not reached the last link, I continually ascend or descend. I am like an aeronaut, borne along in his adventurous car ; I go on, as long as the air sustains me ; and as the air, in appearance at least, has no limits, I go on even until my course is stopped by an obstacle over which I have no power. Thus is the mind of man composed ; but does his knowledge answer to his desire to know ? Alas ! No : human know-

ledge has no extent; it is its first misfortune. The earth, which sustains us and which is the starting-point of our observations, is like a bark in the middle of a shoreless ocean—a motionless bark, because it describes a circle which is invariable, and do we know even that centre of our life, that little bark lost in immensity! Do we know the narrow point from whence our investigations should proceed, from whence the rays of our knowledge should emerge? Since science has been applied to the internal configuration of our globe, in consequence of geological discoveries, we have formed thousands of systems which destroy each other; and, with regard to all that which is beneath the scarcely perceptible stratum submitted to our experiments, we are completely ignorant.

Then, if from our earth, if from the centre we launch into the circumference, what do we see? We discover myriads of luminous spheres, distributed at distances which our instruments cannot calculate; and if they could, it would even then be as nothing: for, beyond those luminous vessels, can it be said that there are no others, and that we discover all that which is? Are there no stars beyond the stars? Are there no invisible luminaries beyond the visible luminaries? Is man the most perfect of created beings? May there not exist pure spirits? Beneath us we see beings grow less, they may increase above us, and form magnificent hierarchies. Science does not pronounce upon this. It binds us to the rind of this earth, to the surface of the visible heavens, and then it says to us: with all the rest you may form philosophy, religion, but science never! I adhere to its avowal.

Thus, human knowledge, which should subject all existences to me, hardly subjects those which, here below, fall under the investigation of the senses. It has then no extent, nor has it any more depth.

Even if we should become acquainted phenomenally

with all existences, there are beyond phenomena which reveal their existence—there are causes, laws, substances ; it is not enough to have imperfectly seen existences, the human mind dives still deeper. It immediately asks itself : “but what is the cause of these phenomena which show forth existences ?” The earth turns round the sun in three hundred and sixty-five days, six hours, and some minutes : what is the cause of that motion ? You call it the power of gravitation : what is the power of gravitation ? What is a power ? Every cause is a power. Who has seen these powers ? You ask us : what is the mystic power ? Where have you seen it ? But that power which supports the world, and you with it, who has seen it, who has touched it ? There is within me a power which animates me, which comes from my lips at this moment, which seeks to move you ; why do you not admit it as you do the power which impels the earth round the sun ? In fine, do you know what a power is ? You say it is by the aid of the powers of electricity, magnetism, and gravitation, that phenomena are produced ; but what are these powers ? You do not know. However, without power all is motionless, all is dead, nothing breathes, there is no air ; all is like a forest in those moments which precede tempests, when there reigns an immobility, silent, profound, and terrible.

Beyond causes, beyond powers, are laws. I perceive that cause acts according to a rule determined, that it is governed by another power, which is the law ; thus, you say that, by gravitation, bodies are attracted to each other in an inverse ratio to the square of their distance. And why do bodies attract each other in an inverse ratio to the square of their distance ? How is it that a force has behind itself another force which keeps it in a circle, which does not permit it to leave the prescribed course ? What is a power which is upon another power, like a wheelwork



upon a wheelwork? You say, there is a power, a cause: that cause is regulated, there is then a law. But what is the law? You do not know: however, you call yourselves learned, you fall into raptures before power and its law. You say, we have seen the phenomenon, we have proved the cause of it, we have defined its law. Spectators of a divine and unknown policy, you are like the curious who attend the councils of kings in the ground-floors of their palaces, among the guards and servants; you judge from the message which passes, of the orders which it bears. You catch a glimpse of the address and superscription, and you think you know the destinies contained in that mysterious paper, sealed by a hand which is invisible to us.

But, mark another greater difficulty: beyond causes and laws, beyond the power which acts and the power which regulates, I discover in my mind the substance or the essence, the most profound basis of the law, of the cause, and of the phenomenon, and I ask myself: what is that substance which is the basis of all things? I examine a drop of water, I interrogate science, which says to me: It is a combination of oxygen and hydrogen. I do not doubt it; but that which the analysis gives you, what is it? You will answer me: It is an element. But what is an element? You do not know the substance of one single drop of water, you know only a first decomposition, and when you had discovered this, the whole scientific world was overwhelmed with joy; it said: Chemistry is created; it is the eighteenth century which has discovered the decomposition of water. From this epoch science will date in posterity, until another age arrives, in which, if it please God, another discovery may be made, which, with as much reason, proclaims itself the parent of science—of that science always to be created even when it is created. You see phenomena which reveal existences, and

you conclude as to causes, laws, and substances; and you neither know the causes, the laws, nor the substances; and as phenomena are but expressions of them, in point of fact you know nothing, at least with any depth.

But these are only slight misfortunes in comparison with that which it remains for me to show to you—this is, the want of light. For, in fine, if we had in our knowledge neither extent nor depth, it would be ignorance—we should simply be without knowledge. We should accept our position; we should say: I do not know; and pass on our way. But your ignorance is not all: there are, in the little that you do know, mysteries which strike one with amazement, mysteries which affect your existence at each moment, all your duties, all your rights, all your interests, all that which belongs to you. You cannot advance a step without meeting with these mysteries, and without wanting to solve them. I will show you some of these.

Let us take matter: is it created, or is it not created? If it is not created, it exists then by itself; how can anything so empty, so inert, exist by itself? What can prescribe limits to a thing which exists by itself? What! my dust exists by itself, and when I have a fever it cannot cure itself? This, however, is very extraordinary! If it does not exist by itself, it is then created. But what is it to create? What is it to make, that which was not, and to do so from nothing, without the help of any pre-existing matter? Behold another abyss. Then I consider that if I had a body, which is matter, I have also a something which I call a spirit. Is spirit different from matter? If spirit be the same thing as matter, why do not these pillars speak to you? Who has commanded them to be motionless? I should like some one to transform me into a pillar, place me somewhere on sentry, and say to me, you will remain there a thousand years.

But if matter is something else than spirit, if matter is inert, whilst spirit is living; if matter suffers itself to be hewn by the common laborer whilst the greatest men find it difficult to govern us; if, I say, matter is something other than spirit, how is it that matter and spirit are united in man, in order to form one single person, one single living being? How is it that two things so unlike each other, that which is dead and that which is living, form one single unity, one single living and active individuality? Next, what has made that being, why has it been made? I have passed an eternity without being; apparently I was not needed, and all at once I was roused in the eternity of my sleep. I have been placed I know not where. That power which had done without me, which had despised me during eternity, has awakened me, it has given me eyes, a mouth, an understanding, and why? How is it that all at once that power has had need of me after I had been so long unnecessary? If I were useful to it, it might have thought so sooner; if I were not useful to it, why has it brought me into the world—and in what a world? I look around me and I see only men who devour each other; all the sons of Adam, attached to the glebe of the body and soul, contend for a bare and bitter livelihood; and, in fine, such a heap of miseries, that there is not a man, if he knew what passes around him in this single city, who would have the courage to sleep, and partake of his food, so full is the world of existences dishonored, of hearts disconsolate, of nakedness, of corrupted souls, of tortures of every kind!

Ah! gentlemen, these are not idle questions. On leaving this place, you will find them palpitating upon the very threshold; they will follow you in your pleasures, in your concerns, in your joys, in your troubles, in your hopes, in your despair. Always, and on all occasions, you will ask yourselves: What is the matter, what is the spirit, whether

God is good or bad, whether you will die entirely, if you have an account to render, or if you have not?

Overwhelmed as I am myself with these things, I go to consult the men who have received in every age a higher degree of genius than the rest, those who may be called the great among minds. I say within myself: After all, there are shining lights here below, men whom God has placed to enlighten mankind; I will go to them as a modest disciple; I will say to them: I, a poor ignorant being toiling hard to gain my existence, I come to you, who have so much leisure, and so much light, I come to ask you what is the secret of my life, and the result of your studies? Now, what do I find?

One says to me: What do you trouble yourself about? Good and evil, matter, spirit, and yourself; it is your imagination which gives birth to all these things. You only dream. There is nothing certain, substantial, but yourself; you cannot conclude upon, or demonstrate that which is not yourself, that which is outside yourself; you alone, are; God, created beings, the infinite, the finite and all the phenomena which occur around you, are simply the dreams of your mind. I have heard the idealist pantheism.

Another answers me: Beware of believing that you are the only reality; on the contrary, it is you who are but a dream; God alone exists, the absolute alone exists, the infinite alone exists. One day whilst he slept, without our knowing why, he dreamed. You are that dream. Your error is the desire to make yourselves realities. I have heard the Indian pantheism.

Spinoza says to me in his turn: No, you are neither a dream, nor total, absolute reality. God exists; He has two attributes, spirit and extent; He manifests those two attributes by all the phenomena of matter and spirit. You, spirit and matter, are a double manifestation of God.



It is your dignity to be a portion of that all-powerful being, of that being who is spirit and matter, extended and unextended ; consequently, you are not an idea, not a dream of God, but a modification, a partial visible appearance of God. You are destined, from the beginning even to the end, to represent the Divinity under a certain form. God is a crystallization, of which you are a facet.

A fourth hastens to me, and in a joyous tone says to me : All these are able men, but they have not arrived at truth. Truth is much more simple, behold it. Only matter exists ; and even to explain to you the basis of science, there exist only atoms ; these atoms move in undefined space, they possess certain means of junction, and, to employ the actual term, of laying hold of each other. You are a fortunate assemblage of atoms, which, after millions of adverse chances, have become entwined together and set in order. As long as it lasts, enjoy it, for the chances are great that your atoms once separated will never become united again in the same way ; and, since this chance is unique, make the best of it. This is my advice, and I am Epicurus, at your service.

Epicurus has scarcely finished speaking when another says to me : It is not at all so ! all is spirit ; matter is an illusion ; our senses lead us astray and present only vain phantoms to us ; live in the spirit, for all is spirit.

One more presents himself : What are we to do ? says he ; some affirm one thing, others another thing ; each has his reasons, and, to say the truth, all is possible and even probable. It is probable that there is nothing but spirit, and it is probable that there is only matter ; it is probable that you are God, and it is probable that you are but a dream ; it is probable that evil exists, and it is probable that it does not exist ; all is probable, and nothing is probable ; if you will take my advice upon the subject, you will seek no farther. This is the last lesson of human wisdom.



God knows, gentlemen, if in exposing these systems to you, I seek to disguise them or to throw ridicule upon them. No; all that you have just heard is written, printed, reprinted; and not only so, they are the master-pieces of the human mind abandoned to itself, the results of the efforts of the most profound thinking during sixty centuries. God will judge them. But, in fine, the greater part of these men were men whom you would have honored, whose great misfortune it was to seek in their reason alone the explanation of the prodigious mystery of life. No, let us not laugh at mankind in the most eminent men whom it has produced. When these creations of the human mind fall under our observation, let us have compassion for their weakness, let us admire the little which we can admire, and not smile. It is a great source of instruction, which God has given to us, and of which we should derive much more profit in aid of acquiring a distrust of ourselves, than to insult the misery of our fellow-men. The enumeration of all these systems would naturally have led me to others more recent. But I have decided not to speak of them; God forbid, that from this pulpit I should make the slightest allusion which might cause pain to a living man? I have said enough which should instruct you; I do not attack men whom the grace of God may enlighten and make our brethren.

However sad may be the obscurities into which we are plunged, gentlemen, yet if the realities of life did not pursue us closely, if life were only an academical re-union, if we had but to think and listen to our thoughts, perhaps mystery would be bearable. But I adjure you all to tell me, is life so easy and of so little weight, that we can accept with so many miseries the despair of not even explaining them to ourselves? What! I desire to know, and knowledge betrays me; I desire to love, and love betrays me; I desire to live, and life betrays me; I wander be-

tween the blessing and the curse, not knowing whether God is a good or an evil genius. I see my fellow-creatures suffering, and even if I did not suffer myself, can I separate myself from the afflictions of mankind, and my cause from its cause? Have not I, a peaceful preacher, receiving the honors of your attention; have not I the right, and is it not my duty to evoke before you the terrible reality of life, to place in opposition to your vain knowledge, the too certain knowledge of our misery? On leaving this place, gentlemen, ascend to a sixth story in this city; there you will find life as it really is, and you will judge at the feet of those miserable pallets, whether you could bear to them the systems of the sages of this world? No; it cannot be that there exist no other knowledge than purely human knowledge; and since I have consulted the sages in vain, I will go elsewhere. Is there not in this assembly some aged and venerable priest? I will go to him, I will say to him: I have seen sages, I have examined their knowledge, I come to hear yours. Since I have listened to the philosopher, I can also listen to the priest: the priest is also a face of humanity; he is formed of flesh and bones, he has blood in his veins, he is a son of Adam like yourselves, and if by chance he is still more absurd than the philosopher, he will at least have the merit of a great difficulty overcome.

The sages whom we have consulted each declared to us that his system was the only comprehensible system—the only one which afforded a clear view of truth. Catholic doctrine, and this is the first remark which excites my admiration and my love, Catholic doctrine does not hold this language to us; on the contrary, it says to us: O man, thou mayest know all, but thou canst understand nothing. Thou mayest know all, because we see the things that be; but thou canst understand nothing, because we see them now “*through a glass in an obscure*

manner ;”<sup>1</sup> and whoever, says the Scripture, “*would search into the majesty of divine works, shall be inevitably overwhelmed by glory.*”<sup>2</sup> So, do not think that I bring you comprehension ; no, I bring you knowledge and incomprehension.

Why can you not comprehend ? In the first place, because God wills that you should not do so : He is our Master, He has made us, He has given us the knowledge of that which it has pleased Him to give us, He has not willed that we should comprehend either Himself or His works. He wills that you should be made sensible of your lowliness ; that you should feel the wretchedness of your finite existence. He has drawn a veil between you and Himself ; and death alone will tear that veil asunder, as the death of Christ rent in twain the veil which covered the Holy of Holies in the temple of Jerusalem. God wills not that you should comprehend, because He wills that you should merit ; you are not simply inert soldiers, for whom a theatrical victory has been prepared, and who have but to appear with arms glistening amongst a crowd which applauds them : you have been placed as real soldiers in the midst of fearful difficulties, of abysses, which when you look upon them, should make you tremble from head to foot : this is your position, because you are great. And what, I ask you, would be your grandeur, if you had seen all, known all, penetrated through all ? What would you have had to do here below, save to rise in the morning, to go to bed at night, to cut out garments, to form coverings for your feet, to mount guard by the palaces of kings in a gaudy uniform ? It was needful for your glory, that there should be a spiritual combat ; it was necessary that you should merit light by combating in darkness. Such was the design of God : it is pride which hides this from

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 13, v. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs, ch. 25, v. 27.

you, it is humility which reveals it to you ; and, without doubt, the first knowledge which Catholic doctrine should impart to you is the knowledge of yourselves, the *Know thyself*, which was graven on the pediment of an ancient temple.

In the second place, you cannot comprehend, because your finite nature does not permit you to comprehend ; even when you will see God face to face, you will not fully comprehend Him, because God is infinite, and you are finite, and it is mathematically absurd to suppose that the finite could encompass the infinite. God alone has an infinite comprehension. Without doubt, when we shall see God face to face, many mysteries will be unveiled, but there will still remain obscurities, the nature of which we shall not be able to determine ; that which is clear, is that the finite will never be able to comprehend the infinite, as the infinite comprehends itself.

This is the first satisfaction which Catholic doctrine causes us to feel ; by imparting to us the measure of our strength, it teaches us not to seek for that which we cannot obtain ; it sheds a great illumination within us with regard to ourselves. But is this all ? No : undoubtedly. Is it not true that you dispute about the most fundamental questions, and you have not even time to discuss them, so hard are you pressed by the necessities of life ? What is, then, your greatest want ? That there should be no more questions. The greatest gift of God, with regard to man, would assuredly be to cause that there should be no more questions ; for, if there should be no more questions, there would be no more obscurity, seeing that it is the question which engenders obscurity. Well ! what has God done ! God has answered clearly, manifestly, to all your questions ; He has given you, by one single act, in one page, that which all your books had not taught you. You ask, What is matter ? God has answered you : It is a sub-



stance deprived of intelligence and liberty. You ask: What is spirit? God has answered you: It is a substance endowed with intelligence and liberty. You ask if matter and spirit have been created or are uncreated? God has answered you: They have been created. You ask if the body and the soul are united together? God has answered you: You are a double nature, at the same time body and soul, united by a relation of distinction in the substance, and of unity in the person. You ask who has made you? God has answered: It is I. You ask why? God has answered you: Because I have loved you from all eternity. You ask why not sooner? God has answered you: Because there is neither sooner nor later for that which is eternal. You ask who has created evil? God has answered you: It is you who are its authors—you and the other free beings—you have been its authors, because you are free; you are free, because you are spirits; and because spirits are beings endowed with intelligence and liberty; and because it was necessary that you should merit your felicity. You ask what is your destiny? God has answered you: It is to live eternally. You ask what is your duty? God has answered you: To obey Me, to observe My commandments, which are, even here below, the source of your life and of your happiness.

That established, gentlemen, I ask you: Are not all the fundamental questions which disturb you solved? Does there remain a single question between God and you? Doubtless you have not a metaphysical demonstration of their solution—I grant it; but you have something better than that, and I proceed to prove it. Assuredly nothing is more clearly demonstrated than mathematics; Saint Thomas somewhere proves that the highest degree of light which God has given to the truths of deduction is mathematical light. Well, then, who is illuminated by mathematical light? How many men are there upon the earth



who understand mathematical demonstrations beyond the first elements? And what would become of humanity, if in order to exist, it should be compelled to understand, I do not say the integral and differential calculations, but simply the eight books of geometry by Legendre? Evidently, it would perish before accomplishing its task. And you believe that God could have saved, converted, and governed the world by sending to it, instead of the Gospel, eight books of universal geometry.

There is, then, light in Catholic doctrine, an immense light, because, with the sovereign authority of God, it answers all questions; it solves them, defines them, takes away from them even the quality of questions, seeing that there is no need of inquiry where there is an answer sovereign and absolute. We have no longer occasion to argue, and this is a great blessing, for we are not placed here below to reason with each other but to act, to build up in time an eternal work.

You will say, perhaps: This knowledge of truth by solutions already prepared is but a nominal knowledge; it reveals propositions to us, and that is all. Doubtless, gentlemen, Catholic doctrine does not impart comprehension to you; but it imparts to you a real knowledge of beings and of their relations in the word of God, because the word of God is an intelligible mirror. When, for instance, God declared to us that He had created the world, certainly I do not figure to my mind the creating act; I do not figure to my mind how being is created by a simple act of will; but I perfectly understand what God designs to say; I see plainly that God, in order to make the world, has not employed, as we do, pre-existing matter; I do not comprehend His act, but I understand what it is. That knowledge, although incomplete, is a very real knowledge, which reveals to me in a few words all that which it is important for me to know, without my being subject even to

the necessity of studying it. Truth is indelibly graven on brass, where every one might read his origin, his duties, his rights, his interests, his destinies. The poor man, passing with his burden before a crucifix, sees why his shoulders are laden; the little child learns without difficulty the most profound metaphysics in spelling the letters of the alphabet; he grows up reciting the commandments of God and of the Church, the Apostles' Creed, and "Our Father, who art in heaven;" and he knows all before having thought of what it is to know; he knows all, without discussion, without geometry, without even the obscurity which inevitably surrounds every demonstration; he knows all by the intelligible word of God, accepted with simplicity. A time will come when that light will become transformed into another light, into another kind of vision; but even then we shall know nothing new of matter, of spirit, of God, of man, of creation, of our final destiny. We shall see otherwise than we yet see; we shall see in the Divine Essence that which we had seen in His word.

As to the depth of Catholic knowledge, and its extent, they are no more than consequences of what I have said, over which I shall pass rapidly. In effect, we ascend by Catholic doctrine to the first cause of our being; it tells us what the relations are which unite us to God, and that which constitutes the fundamental mystery of life; it reveals to us the cause of causes, the law of laws, the substance of substances, the final and the supreme reason of all phenomena. When it has said to us these words: "God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," in Him there is trinity of persons, unity of substance; every phenomenon, every cause, every law, every substance has been manifested in its source.

With regard to extent, Catholic doctrine opens to us, upon the universe, a horizon which encompasses its most remote limits. It teaches us that beings form a graduated

scale, from the atom even to God; that there exist invisible hierarchies of spirits united together and with us by profound relations; from whence results the unity of the world, one single and sublime movement, which causes the things which come from God to go to God, in a mysterious orbit, of which man, spirit and matter, occupies the central point.

And in this manner we arrive, by Catholic doctrine, to a threefold peace, that of light, of depth, of extent in knowledge. Between you and ourselves, gentlemen, there is the difference between disquiet and peace. You seek, and for us there is not even a question; you doubt, and for us there is not even an emotion, but a steady regard; you build up and destroy turn by turn, for us every act builds up; time even escapes from your vacillating action, for us eternity follows, and never fails us. And this is why Catholic doctrine has subsisted more or less since the beginning of the world, although always combated; it is because it was resuscitated in Jesus Christ, in the mysteries of His life and death, that the world is supported upon its basis. It maintains there in a few words, the knowledge of causes, of laws, of substances, of all the true relations of beings, which human efforts unceasingly tend to lose sight of and destroy. See, then, gentlemen, in comparing these two positions, the side which you will take once in your life. On the one side there are systems without conscience, which clash against and destroy each other, of which you have been unable even to hear the description, although a serious one, without ironical astonishment; on the other is Catholic doctrine, simple natural doctrine, where all is definite, where all is based upon the rock. Enter into the bosom of the Church; pass over from the camp of disquiet to the camp of peace, from the camp of obscurity to the camp of light, from the camp of narrowness to the camp of extent, of breadth, and of depth, so that

I may one day say to you, in meeting you again in more familiar places than these, that which Saint Paul said to the early Christians: "*You were heretofore darkness, but now are you light in the Lord.*"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Ephesians, ch. 5, v. 8.

## TWENTIETH CONFERENCE.

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OF CATHOLIC REASON AND HUMAN REASON IN THEIR  
RELATION WITH EACH OTHER.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

LAST Sunday we passed from the question of Catholic certainty to the question of Catholic knowledge, and, comparing human knowledge with Catholic knowledge, we showed that human knowledge wanted extent, depth, and light; extent, because it perceives but a limited number of existences; depth, because it does not penetrate below the surface of the causes, laws, and substances, from whence phenomena proceed; light, because even side by side with the things which it knows, it is always placed amongst abysses which it cannot sound; whilst Catholic knowledge is clear, because God has decided all the questions which embarrass the human mind, and has decided them by His sovereign and infallible word; extended, because God has opened the world from one end to the other for us, has shown to us the eastern and the western poles, and measured the diameter; profound, because He has taught us to know the first causes, the first laws, the primary substance.

And now, it is manifest there exist two kinds of reason



in humanity: human reason and Catholic reason. For reason is a collection of truths which enlighten the intelligence, which identify themselves with man, and become the principle of his actions; now, there exist a mass of human truths and a mass of Catholic truths, which identify themselves both with man, which enlighten and perfect his intelligence, and form the principle of his actions; consequently, there exist human reason and Catholic reason, a double centre of life and activity, so different from each other that a wise and prudent act in the point of view of Catholic reason may be an act of folly in the point of view of human reason, and reciprocally. From thence many questions arise which reduce themselves to one single question. What relation is there between human reason and Catholic reason? What are these two beacons lighted up in humanity? Are they in contradiction or in harmony? Are they separate or united? Do they answer to each other or do they not? Are they placed at the entry of the haven of mankind like two parallel lights, which mutually give light, or are they lost in the space which separates them, and which does not permit them to communicate with each other? Is there equality between those two kinds of reason or hierarchy? Is there peace or war? and if there be war, what are its general tactics?

All reason, whether human or Catholic, is composed of first principles and consequences. Principles are certain indemonstrable truths, which serve to demonstrate the rest. They are certain truths; for if they were not certain truths, they would not be principles; they are indemonstrable; for if they were capable of demonstration, they would not be first principles: they serve to demonstrate all the rest; for if they produced nothing, if they demonstrated nothing, they would not be principles. Thus, truth is for us like a germ which is sown in our intelligence, which

grows there, which develops itself there, which produces there flowers and fruits. In God light is a circle, the circumference of which is nowhere, and the centre everywhere, as Pascal has said ; but for us a basis was necessary : we stood in need of something inevitable, which might serve us as a commencement, a starting-point, a luminous principle.

For example, the existing being is ; here is a first principle of human reason. A thing cannot be and not be at the same time under the same relation. This, again, is a first principle of human reason. God is one in the three persons ; here is a first principle of Catholic reason. Just as the first principle of human reason is true, and does not demonstrate itself, so that other first principle, God is one in three persons, is also true, and does not demonstrate itself. The one commences, the other commences also, with this difference, that the certainty of the principles of human reason, and the certainty of the principles of Catholic reason, are not of the same nature.

Now, are these first principles of human reason and of Catholic reason in contradiction or in harmony ? They cannot be in contradiction ; for what are they ? Truths. Truth is that which is. That which is cannot contradict that which is. Moreover, truth, regarding it in its source, is God Himself ; and although His light, one and unchangeable, is communicated to us by two sources, that light, in dividing itself into two streams, cannot lose its unity ; otherwise God Himself would not be one. There is then harmony between human reason and Catholic reason ; and when you require of us that our Catholic principles should not contradict your human principles, you are right in doing so. It is your right ; our right is to show you, as we shall do, that really they do not contradict each other.

But, because human reason and Catholic reason are not

in contradiction, does it necessarily follow that they should be in communion, that they should mutually understand and aid each other? Yes, and necessarily still. There exists a threefold communion between human reason and Catholic reason: communion of intelligibility, communion of analogy, and communion of reciprocal confirmation.

Communion of intelligibility; for, if human reason did not understand Catholic reason, and if Catholic reason did not understand human reason, there would not only be in the human mind two orders of truths derived from two different sources, there would be two intelligences in man, and two intelligences totally foreign the one to the other: this cannot be conceived in a being single and undivided. Human intelligence is single and undivided, although enlightened by two lights, forming within it a double reason. And in fact, when the divine word declares to me: God is one in three persons, do you not perceive that if I had not, antecedently, ideas of God, of unity, of triplicity, of personality, I should not even understand the Word of God? And since I do understand it, it is because all the words of that proposition—God is one in three persons—belong to a common source of human intelligibility, the same for human reason and for Catholic reason; or if you like it better, that human reason imparts to Catholic reason the sense of each of these isolated words, whilst Catholic reason imparts to human reason the tie which draws them together, and forms of them a new proposition; so that human reason and Catholic reason, united and blended together, are each found entire in that announcement: God is one in three persons.

Communion of analogy; for what, I ask you, has nature revealed to us? Of Whom is it the mirror? Of Whom does it represent to us the existence and the attributes? Of God. It is Saint Paul who teaches us this: "*The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are*

*clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."*<sup>1</sup> And what is also revealed to us by the Word of God? Again, God Himself, without doubt, in a manner more intimate, more complete; but still God. Now, that first representation of God, and that second representation of God, showing forth the same thing to us, it is impossible that analogy should not exist between them; that is to say, that I should not find in nature a shadow of that which I find in the Word of God, and that I should not find in the Word of God a light which reflects back upon nature itself; so that they are two centres of light which reflect their rays to produce that entire and magnificent light which we call theology.

Lastly, communion of reciprocal confirmation between human reason and Catholic reason; for, gentlemen, where is our proof that God has spoken to men, if it be not within you, if it be not in nature, in its visible works? From whence do we derive that which confounds you, if not from within yourselves, within your own reason? Before what tribunal do we cite you when we accuse you of mistaking truth? Do we not take yourselves for judges? I have no prætorian guard for imposing truth upon you by constraint; I must persuade you; and how shall I persuade you, if I do not address myself to something which is within you, which conspires against yourselves; if my means of attack are not in your intelligence, if my prætorians are not within your own soul, and do not betray you? What do I? What ought I to do? What have I done? Like Themistocles, I am come to sit down beside you at your hearth, to mix myself up with your impressions, your hopes, your love, your hatred, your desires, with all that you have and are, and consequently with your human reason, which is the necessary pedestal upon which I shall afterwards place that statue of truth which I

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Romans, ch. 1, v. 20.



call Catholic reason. We do not hide this from ourselves ; we have no interest in hiding it from you. Has Achilles, motionless upon his block of marble, any interest in destroying it ? Reason ! we are its first, its immortal defenders.

It is I who, even at this moment, protect your reason against itself, who, in tracing its limits, hinder you from obscuring and dishonoring it. Ah ! it is not Catholic reason alone which has been confided to the Church, but human reason also ; and wherever Catholic reason grows weak, human reason decreases in proportion. Therefore do not triumph too soon because of the admissions which I have made to you ; do not think that we shall render you nothing in exchange for the support which you lend to us. If your human reason confirms my Catholic reason, your reason also wants to be confirmed by mine. For what is your affliction, that wound of human reason which consumes you, that sigh from your soul, which I understand as soon as it approaches my ear ? . . . Ah ! you know its name ; it is that sigh and that trouble which is above all others ; it is doubt !

I adjure you all to tell me, why you are here ? What happens here which touches you, which forces you to come and listen to me ? Alas ! in your pride, which is without measure, which however is lawful for many things, in that boundless and bottomless pride, scepticism floats like a vessel without a pilot in the immensity of the ocean. How grand and magnificent your vessel is ! It has three decks, and is armed with splendid and powerful guns, you have invented powder to extend the range of their power and to warn the shores of your approach. But, unhappy man, silence alone answers you, the beacon of your reason never appears to you, the land escapes from you as it did from Columbus. And why ? I told you the other day—because you have no extent in your reason in which to



measure the abyss of life, no depth in which to fathom it, no light sufficient to illuminate it. What do you expect to find but doubt? Well, then, we remove that doubt from you; Catholic reason lays hold of yours, all trembling as it is, encourages it, strengthens it, lays open to it the horizon, stands before it like an eastern pyramid; and you, Arabs of truth, who pass by on horseback, vanquished by the simple aspect of that mass, nevertheless you try against immutability the power of motion; the pyramid looks down upon you and is silent, and its silence is still more powerful than six thousand years of your words.

Between us then, gentlemen, it is a matter of retaliation; we rest upon you for confirmation of our reason, and, as long as you do not rest upon us for confirmation of yours, you have no road by which to emerge from doubt.

But, however, in spite of these relations of intelligibility, of analogy, of reciprocal confirmation, let us be careful; the two reasons still remain really distinct. For you will never deduce from all the human principles, that Catholic first principle: God is one in three persons. Now, wherever filiation is wanting, distinction necessarily exists. Catholic reason not being a consequence of human reason, belongs to quite a different order; it has veritable principles, it begins in itself, or rather it begins in God without any intermediary between itself and Him. And, in consequence, the relation of communion does not destroy the relation of distinction between human reason and Catholic reason.

Here I suppose that a doubt presents itself to you, and that you stop me. Since communion is necessary between the two reasons, why are they two? Of what use is duality where it is desired to arrive at unity? What caprice on the part of God, who wills to enlighten us, that he has not lighted up one single beacon, instead of two, and that he has willed that that perfect light should be the result of

a double light! And why? I can only say to you that of this I know nothing. I may remind you that you are body and soul, and yet unity; that God has formed your own essence by means of a duality perfectly distinct, which produces a real unity in the human person; that mankind is composed of two societies—temporal society and spiritual society; and that, just as the body and the soul produce the unity of your person, as spiritual society and temporal society produce the unity of mankind, it is not astonishing that there should be also in you two reasons—human reason and divine reason, perfectly united, although perfectly distinct. And if you desire to know the cause of it, I will tell you as much as can be known of it: it is because you are the limit of two worlds, the point of junction of degraded nature with exalted nature, of the world of bodies and of the world of spirits; from whence there necessarily results within you the strange action of a double life, matter and spirit all together, temporal society and spiritual society, natural light and supernatural light. Here, gentlemen, lies the difficulty of our position, as it is also its dignity, and this difficulty is great: all human history, all the history of the understanding, all the history of society takes its windings and turnings in that immense difficulty of duality in unity, and of unity in duality. We may try a thousand ways of solving this difficulty; to make the soul with the body or the body with the soul; temporal society with spiritual society or spiritual society with temporal society; natural light with supernatural light or supernatural light with natural light; the essence of things will always resist these hopeless efforts. The first principle of wisdom is to accept that which is. That which is, is duality in unity. The duty of true philosophers and real statesmen is to respect and to constitute duality, by respecting and also by constituting unity. To attack unity is to destroy all; to attack dual-

ity, is to oppress all. The human race will always protest against that double attack, because the human race can never desire either anarchy or oppression. Truth lies midway between them.

Now, gentlemen, as we have proved the relation of harmony and of communion between human reason and Catholic reason, let us endeavor to find if there exists between them any relation of subordination. We have already said, that from human reason Catholic reason is not inferred, nor from the contrary. It is needless then to seek for a relation of filiation between them, and, consequently, it is needless to seek for the subordination which must arise from that relation.

Are they connected at least by a subordination of antiquity? Does human reason precede Catholic reason, or does Catholic reason precede human reason? Neither the one nor the other. Whatever systems there may be upon the origin of human first principles—systems which I do not approach here—it is always the case that there exists in this respect a fact not to be confuted: namely, that reason has not reached him to whom no one has ever spoken; that the deaf and dumb man, born in the midst of your towns, of your wonders, and of the spectacle of heaven, does not possess general truths, metaphysical principles, until human language has reached him and has communicated these to him. And as human speech, as soon as it reaches the ear of man, addresses to him human language and divine language at one and the same time, the birth of human reason and that of Catholic reason are confounded together. The same cradle, the same language, incites both; language at the same time terrestrial and celestial, human and superhuman, and which contains, indissolubly united, all the power which exists in both. It is on this account that God gave to the mother the first words of instruction—to the mother, who has

never blasphemed God. If our cradles had been confided to men, ah ! perhaps, in the animosity of their passions, they would have been able to hide God from us, and to strive to obscure our divine reason ; but our cradles have been placed under the guardianship of our mothers ; and to the present time, even among the followers of false religions, children have learned to pronounce the name of God at the same time as that of man ; to name the Father who is in Heaven, with the father who is upon earth. I thank you, Christian mothers, in the name of your sons here present, and in the name of the entire human race !

With regard to antiquity, human reason is not then subordinate to Catholic reason, nor Catholic reason to human reason ; they are two sisters, born on the same day. Nevertheless, gentlemen, by the single fact that Catholic reason conducts man into more extent, more depth, and more light, because it increases the intellectual capital of the human race, it is manifest that it has the advantage over human reason. Catholic reason includes human reason, whilst human reason does not include Catholic reason ; Catholic reason is human reason, with something in addition ; and as the greater outbalances the less, the addition the subtraction, it is clear even by virtue of the laws of arithmetic, that human reason is in subordination to Catholic reason.

Then, gentlemen, we have relation of harmony, of communion in distinction, of hierachical subordination ; these are all the relations which unite human reason to Catholic reason. And yet war exists between these two powers, a three-fold war : social war, scientific war, rational war.

Social war—that is to say, that human reason, by violence, by artifice, by assumed legality, strives to prescribe Catholic reason, and to shackle its development.

Scientific war—that is to say, that the learned, who should exhibit to us the Divine Idea, in all things, hide it



unceasingly from us ; and that they prefer to falsify scientific truth itself, rather than lend any support in the human mind to divine truth.

I do not occupy myself with these two wars ; I should only speak to you of the rational war ; because it applies to the relations between human reason and Catholic reason, relations which we are to-day considering. This war is the most universal of the three ; for there are but few learned, and but few public men ; but every man possesses the elements of reason ; and consequently, the rational war of human reason against Catholic reason, is the war of all against all. We say : There is a relation of harmony or of non-contradiction between human reason and Catholic reason ; we are told that there is contradiction between them. We say : There is no separation, but communion, between human reason and Catholic reason ; we are told that there is separation between them. We say : There is a hierarchical subordination between these two powers, and that Catholic reason holds the first rank ; we are told that it is Catholic reason which is subordinate to human reason. In this consists all the war.

There is, they say, contradiction between human reason and Catholic reason. How is this ? Because by our own avowal, our dogmas are incomprehensible. It is true, we admit it ; and not only do we admit it, but we desire that it should be so. Now, is it contradictory to human reason to admit incomprehensible dogmas ? I maintain the contrary. What is it to understand ? It is to know a thing with such a degree of perfection, that no question can arise upon that thing. At the moment when you ask, Why ? you have not understood. You may know : I do not say that you do not know ; but you do not understand, since you ask a question. If you understood, you would have no more questions. Now, I ask you : Where is the book ; where is the system ; where the idea ; where



the truth, about which this question "Why?" is not asked? Here is a grain of corn. Science has analyzed this grain of corn; science knows what it contains; and for all that, I shall say of this grain of corn what La Bruyère said about a drop of water: "O princes of this world, you have armies, arsenals, thousands of men obedient to a motion of your lips; we, simple men, we laboriously dig the earth, and we want water to fructify our labors! O princes, potentates, majesties, create a drop of water!" And I say: We simple men, who laboriously dig the earth, and who have against us the hail, the sun, the rain, the winds, we want corn! O princes of science, potentates of analysis, majesties of the academies, create a grain of corn! You cannot; and why? For, in fine, you have decomposed that grain of corn—you know all that which it contains: yes all, save that which constitutes a germ, save the power, because a power is only seen by its effects, save the power which forms the germ.

A thing worthy of remark, is the ingeniousness of human logic, which establishes as a fundamental rule of the art of reasoning, that indefinite progress is not admissible—that is to say, we cannot constantly ask: Why? And, without doubt, it is in the right; for, although it may be an invincible desire of the human mind to know and to advance continually in knowledge, yet a point is reached at which it would be senseless to continue to ask; Why? a point at which logic stops us, at which we are constrained to exclaim, like those travellers who had reached the extremities of the world:

*Sistimus hic tandem nobis ubi defuit orbis.*

Understand, then, that it is not contradictory to human reason to admit incomprehensible things; and that, on the contrary, it admits nothing which is not incomprehensible.

They go further, they say: Catholic reason admits

more than the incomprehensible ; it admits the unintelligible. What do they pretend ? that the propositions which constitute the first principles of Catholic reason are not understood ? But it is impossible that there should be anything unintelligible for man when that thing is declared. When I say :—God is one in three persons ; that proposition, be it true or false, is intelligible to my internal hearing. When I say : God is cruel ; I put forth a proposition which is false, but not unintelligible ; it is so little unintelligible that I shall reject it by a very simple reason ; I shall oppose the idea of cruelty to the idea of God, and I shall show that these two ideas mutually exclude each other. Now, all is declared in the Catholic religion ; therefore all is intelligible.

Our adversaries must abandon those two positions, of incomprehensibility and of unintelligibility ; and taking our dogmas in detail, they must prove of each in particular that it is contrary to human reason. They do this ; but do they succeed ? Certainly, if there is a dogma apparently open to attack under this head, it is the dogma of the Holy Trinity, of a God—one in three persons ; for how are unity and triplicity united in one single being, to form its essence ? Let us see. I extend my hand in space : what is space ? Space is an unity of extent formed by three dimensions, really distinct from each other—length, breadth, and height. See, then, space defined in a manner analogous even to the definition of God, and which we are unable to conceive otherwise than by the re-union of the ideas of unity and of triplicity. And we know no being which is not constituted by unity, which is its vital centre, and by multiplicity, which is its movement to and fro ; so that to attack the idea of the Trinity, is to attack even the idea of life in its essence. Am I not living ; do you not feel that there is unity in me, as in yourselves ; do you not feel at the same time multiplicity—the nerves,

the veins, the hand which feels, and wants to seize? Take away the multiplicity, you take away the motion, there is no more life; take away the unity, you take away the mainspring from whence all the motion proceeds; life would equally disappear.

Behold, however, your objections, that which during eighteen centuries you oppose to truth; and all—learn it well—all may be resolved with that deplorable facility. I call it deplorable; for it is ignominious for the human mind to have found nothing better against God, and with which to resist Jesus Christ, His Gospel and His Church, than such stupidities. You must feel, gentlemen, that I shall not pass all her dogmas in review. I have only wished to show you how the war has been occasioned between human reason and Catholic reason, under this first point of view. I pass on to the separation, which it is pretended exists between the two reasons.

Here the tactic is more skilful. See how the separation of human reason from Catholic reason is understood. I am about to give you its formula. In the last century, a *savant* wrote a history of the formation of the globe: "The sun," said he, "one day, I know not by what power, let fall a portion of his substance, which was seized by other powers. That igneous substance, in cooling, is become earth." It is true that Moses speaks of its formation in another manner; we shall not attack his account. Revelation is sacred, but science has its separate domain; they are two lights which should respect each other by remaining each within its own limits.

A physician said: "We study the anatomy of the human body; we examine how life proceeds, the central point where it commences, or from whence it spreads itself; we have not found the place of the soul, nor have we discovered its necessity. Religion affirms its existence, and that is sufficient; it belongs to a sacred order, that which

we speak of belongs to a profane order; that which is placed so high cannot be injured."

Thus they proceeded, I will not say with hypocrisy, but with skill, to the separation of human reason and Catholic reason. And what was the ultimate object of that tactic, so full of respect? Frederick II., king of Prussia, confided it one day to his friends, with a rare happiness of expression: "Do you know what it is necessary to do to finish with the Catholic Church?" said he; "we must make an owl of it." . . . You know, gentlemen, that solitary and sad bird which sits sullenly in corners.

Behold the secret: isolate us from all—from politics, from morals, from sentiment, from knowledge; suspend us between earth and heaven, without any kind of support, and say to us, with one knee bent: You have God, what need have you of anything else?

We do not accept that position. We adhere to all, because we come from God, who is in all; nothing is foreign to us, because God is nowhere a stranger. Hear the Gospel supporting itself upon the heart of man: "*God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son for it.*"<sup>1</sup> And hear Bossuet, who gives you the commentary upon it: "Now, let them oppose to me whatever they will . . . (I quote from that memory which great men always create in the mind, even when the immortality of their words does not become engraven there.) When you say to me that it is impossible that a God made Himself man, because you are nothing, and God is all, I shall exclaim: God so loved the world! If you tell me that it is absurd that God could have been crucified, I shall answer you: God so loved the world!" And, in effect, if we poor mortals can give our own lives for that which we love, why should not God, who is the principle of love, be able to make Himself man in order to die for love?

<sup>1</sup> St. John, ch. 3, v. 16.



God so loved the world ! There is our strength ! There, gentlemen, in your reason, in your sentiments, in love ! The charity which we preach to you is love ! God is loved as a creature is loved. The effect is not the same with regard to the senses ; but there are not two kinds of love. The difference is, that one is little, and is applied to limited objects, whilst the other is great, and is applied to an object without limits ; the one dilates in the finite, the other in the infinite. “Be ye enlarged,” said St. Paul to the Corinthians. Catholic reason, in bearing its dogmas to you, brings to you nothing new and foreign ; it opens your heart and enlarges it ; it opens your intelligence and enlarges it ; it becomes man to render you divine.

Hearken to St. Paul : “*There is neither Jew nor Greek ; there is neither bond nor free ; there is neither male nor female.*”<sup>1</sup> Where is the force of this saying, if it be not in the sentiment of human fraternity, but of fraternity placed upon a new basis, our community of blood with the God made man ? Behold that which has founded upon earth a policy which human reason was incapable of creating. You had dishonored man by the inequality of slavery ; Catholic reason, accomplishing that which you were unable to do, has raised up mankind without you, in spite of you, by a charter which has been the principle of all your charters, and which is still their only real support.

Hearken again : “*I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not,*” said St. Paul ; “*I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ, for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongeth the adoption of children, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises : whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ*

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Galatians, ch. 3, v. 28.



*according to the flesh.*"<sup>1</sup> Thus St. Paul desires to be separated from Jesus Christ; he who had elsewhere said: "Who shall separate me from the love of Jesus Christ?" He desired it now; and for whom? For his country, for his kinsmen according to the flesh!

Ah! it suits you well to wish to make of us the pariahs of humanity; you, to whom we have imparted all the sentiments which have made humanity! Go on: you will not succeed; you will neither take from us knowledge, nor love, nor anything of that which is man. Genius is not taken away at pleasure; liberty is not taken away at will; nor dignity, nor country. Drive us out, if you will; we shall bear away in exile, even to the ends of the world, our names and our hearts of citizens; we will serve you there by our toils and with our blood; and when, on some future day, you shall send your ambassadors to those distant lands, they will find there pages written by us for your history, and which will serve them for introductions.

There remains the question of subordination. We are told that human reason has the supremacy, because we could not base our Catholic reason without the help of human reason. They are mistaken; we have proved that, by the side of rational power and above it, mystic power existed, sufficient to impart religious certainty to the immense majority of the human race; whilst human reason is unable to escape from the infirmity of doubt, when it is not based upon Catholic reason, which serves it at the same time as a support and a crown. Before claiming the supremacy, before assuming the position of king, there must be subjects. I look for the subjects of human reason, the subjects of philosophy; where are they? Where are the subjects of Plato, of Aristotle, of Zeno, of Leibnitz, of Kant? Philosophy, unfortunate as it is, engenders

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Romans, ch. 9, v. 1, 2.

disciples, who, hardly having received life from it, having received the arms of the mind, turn against their masters, and constitute new schools upon the ruins of those from whence they have come. Thus was it with the ancient philosophers, thus with the new ones. You have no subjects; how should you possess sovereignty, supremacy? And you have the still greater misfortune than the having no subjects, you have no children. O philosophers! proud rulers of the human mind, where are your flocks which follow your instructions, where are the souls who love you with filial affection? I am yet young, and, notwithstanding, I have already seen many souls in mine! I have felt many tears of the soul upon my cheeks! I have pressed many spiritual friends to my bosom of Christian and monk! Jesus Christ promised us this when he said: "*Whoever shall leave house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for My sake and for the Gospel, shall find houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children.*"<sup>1</sup> O, philosophers! who claim the supremacy of human reason over Catholic reason, where are your children? Where are the tears dried up, the confessions heard, the ameliorations of life, the consolations obtained from you? Ah! even if you had subjects, you have no children! And where paternity is wanting, how can there be sovereignty? Where sovereignty is wanting, how can there be supremacy?

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark, ch. 10, v. 29, 30.



OF THE  
EFFECTS OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE  
UPON THE SOUL.





## TWENTY-FIRST CONFERENCE.

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OF THE HUMILITY PRODUCED IN THE SOUL BY CATHOLIC  
DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,<sup>1</sup>

GENTLEMEN,

ALL doctrine may be considered with regard to the teaching body which possesses and propagates it, with regard to the sources which contain it, to the effects which it produces, to its founder, and, in fine, even to its essence. This is why, gentlemen, having been called to explain Catholic doctrine to you from this pulpit, I have first treated of the Church, of her characteristics, of her constitution, of her authority, of her relations with the temporal order; next, of the sources from whence the Church derives her doctrine, such as Tradition, Scripture, Reason, Faith; and finally, last year, I approached the effects which that doctrine produces upon the mind. And you have seen that it produces rational certainty; that is to say, a conviction, reflected, sovereign, immutable, and, in addition, a supra-rational certainty; that is to say, a conviction, not the result of learning, transluminous, and which excludes doubt; then knowledge, which, by its extent, its depth, its light, surpasses human knowledge. Lastly, I proved that between human reason and Catholic

<sup>1</sup> Monseigneur Affre, Archbishop of Paris.

reason there exist relations of harmony, of intelligibility, of analogy, of reciprocal confirmation, and, notwithstanding, of supremacy in favor of Catholic reason.

To-day, gentlemen, we shall advance further upon that route which we have opened before you ; for the conclusions arrived at by the mind are not the last conclusions arrived at by man. When man has perceived something ; when, by that light which shines within him, he has discovered an object, however remote it may be, another phase of his being is seen to appear, another power, which is sensibility. He is carried towards that object by a certain sentiment, to the point where a third faculty, which is the seat of power, takes possession of that sentiment, commands, directs, produces external and internal acts, and puts the whole life in motion.

This is why, gentlemen, after Catholic doctrine has produced in the intelligence certainty, knowledge, reason, it is necessary to know what it produces in the sentiment and in the will ; or, if you like it better, what are its effects upon the soul. This will be the object of our conferences this year. I will commence them without any other preamble, after having warned you, however, that the words of man are nothing alone, and that all eloquence is a vain sound, if the Spirit of God does not fertilize it. I pray, then, those of you who are Christians to lift up your hearts towards God, in order that His blessing may descend from on high upon us ; and I pray those who have not the happiness of being Christians, to show some indulgence at least to the state of their souls, and to co-operate by a willing impulse with the efforts of those words which they are about to hear, and with the fraternal desires of all those friendly hearts which are about to aid the words, so that they may sink into their ears, and attract them even to truth.

The first and most natural object of man's knowledge

is himself. It is upon himself that his first observation falls, upon himself that he always returns. He may detach himself from every other thought, even from that of God, even from that of the universe; but although he may will to shut the eyes of his understanding by an act of his highest power, he could not separate himself from himself. And this is why, gentlemen, the sentiment which man has of himself, the sentiment which is born within man in relation to the view which he has of himself, is assuredly of the highest importance. For he will conquer every other sentiment, however dominant it may be, because he will be able to withdraw himself from the objects which produce it; but the sentiment which he has of himself, the sentiment corresponding to the watch which he unceasingly keeps upon himself, he will not rid himself of for a single day, for a single instant. And as the sentiment affects the will, and the will is the mainspring of the action, you understand that the question of the sentiment which we have of ourselves is a question of capital importance.

I open, then, trembling, the heart of man, and I have no need to seek far; alas! I have but to open my own, to discover what passes in those of my fellow-creatures. I open the heart of man, and I know that he loves himself. He loves himself, and I do not blame him for it: why should he hate himself? But he not only loves himself—he loves himself more than anything else, he loves himself above everything else, he loves himself in an exclusive manner, he loves himself even to pride, even to desiring to be first, first and without rival. Let us descend into ourselves: whether we have been born on a throne, or in the shop of an artisan, in the bottom of our hearts, since the moment in which moral life became awakened within us, we have not ceased to aspire to the exultation of pre-eminence. They say that Cæsar, passing in some Alpine

village, and perceiving that in that little forum there was an agitation for the choice of a chief, halted a moment before the spectacle. His captains who surrounded him were astonished: "Are there here also," said they, "disputes about pre-eminence?" and Cæsar, like the great man that he was, said to them, "I would rather be first in that little town than second in Rome." This is the true cry of nature. Wherever we may be, we desire to be first. Artists, chosen to reproduce the things which are by the pencil or the graver; orators, knowing how to create thoughts in the minds of the multitude; generals, commanding battalions, and promising them the flight of the enemy; ministers, conducting empires; kings, agitated under the purple; all aspire to pre-eminence, and to undivided pre-eminence. We are only satisfied when, surveying with a look that which surrounds us, we find an empty space, and beyond that space, as far beyond as possible, the people on their knees to adore us.

A young man has received from nature a pleasing physiognomy: he has fair hair, blue eyes, a noble forehead, an amiable smile; you suppose that this fair creature would aspire to nothing beyond the destiny of a flower. You deceive yourselves; he dreams, he also, of pre-eminence and dominion; with those feeble ties which bind hearts together, he seeks to make himself an ephemeral object of admiration upon those lips of the world which relate all the passing marvels and glories that wither and perish at the moment of their birth.

In short, gentlemen, we aspire to pre-eminence even by the power of nothingness. I shall insist no longer on this truth; for it is common-place, and, by the grace of God, I have a horror of what is common-place.

But see what follows. When man, thus infatuated with himself, looks around him, does he find that which corresponds to the illusions of his pride? No; he finds

quite the contrary ; he finds ranks formed where he has no place ; the hierarchy of birth, the memorials of an old glory which has traversed centuries, and which, upon the brow of the man without merit, shine by the power of history ; the hierarchy of talent which nature has distributed in her caprices, and which, in spite of all our protestations, stands above us, and offers magnificent insults to our self-love ; the hierarchy of fortune acquired by virtue, vice, or ability ; hierarchies of all forms and names, reposing upon laws, traditions, upon necessities, upon abysses always ready to open themselves when men attack that which time has built up. And in beholding that, man, fallen from nothingness into the midst of all those thrones which defy him, becomes indignant : he reacts with all the force of that power of command which is in him, and which is able to attack even nature, as Ajax, when near to death, threatened the majesty of the gods with his broken sword : his irritated pride defies everything ; the hatred of the superiority to which he submits becomes united in his heart to the hatred of the equality which he repulses. Is it not Mahomet who has somewhere said :

“Equals! for a long time Mahomet has had none?”

And do you not know that the modern Cæsar, when he received in Egypt a letter from a member of the Institute, which commenced with these words : “*Mon cher collègue,*” crushed it in that hand which was used to countersign victory, and repeated with disdain : “*Mon cher collègue ! quel style !*” We have in vain, gentlemen, decreed equality in charters ; pride only ratifies its proclamation to humble those who are higher than ourselves, and not to lift up those who are lower. The hatred of superiority only calls to itself the hatred of equality and the scorn of inferiority. These are the three legitimate children of pride. If, at least, a real elevation



reigned in that heart fascinated by the want of pre-eminence! But pride leagues itself too well with baseness; a hollow baseness lives in pride, and creates torments for it which the most cruel tyrants would not have invented. That conscience, so delicate with regard to the throne upon which it takes its place, that conscience is bought and sold; it humbles itself to become great; it begs on its knees the purple which is to cover its nakedness; it submits to being despised in order to obtain the right to deal it back again.

See, gentlemen, man as he is, the sentiment which he has of himself, and the normal consequences of that sentiment. Now, I say that evidently, and without a great effort of logic, this is a false, an inhuman, an unfortunate sentiment. It is a false sentiment: for it is impossible that everybody can be first, and consequently the will of Nature or of Providence, whatever name you may give it, could not be to call us to pre-eminence. If pre-eminence were our ultimate object and our vocation, one single being only would exist, and even he would not be the first, because that there may be first, there must be last.

It is an inhuman sentiment; for it leads to the degradation of all that which does not arrive at pre-eminence, to despising all those who are not fortunate enough or strong enough to create an elevated position for themselves. Finally, it is an unfortunate sentiment: for it is in contradiction to all the realities of life. Pride makes boundless demands, and life gives but little, and gives so much the more cruelly as it favors a few, and exhibits at a great distance its rare *parvenus* to panting ambition. Pride suggests to a poor artisan that he is sovereign; and the unhappy man, with his mind full of that sovereignty, goes into the street to beg for labor, which he does not always find, and which he dishonors in advance by his vices. How can you conceive that happi-

ness dwells in so painful a contradiction between that which we feel and that which really is?

Catholic doctrine, gentlemen, designs to change altogether the sentiment which we have naturally of ourselves. It attacks that sentiment which appears to be indestructible, and not to differ from our essence; it has hoped to form another for us of a contrary kind, and I admire that hope and that singular security. I admire a doctrine which does not fear to pull man down even to his base, which not only designs utterly to destroy within him a radical sentiment, but which creates a sentiment opposed to the old one, and designs to set it up in the most profound depths of his heart. Man lived in pride, he will live in humility. And what is humility? Humility is a voluntary acceptance of the place which has been marked out for us in the hierarchy of beings, a possession of ourselves with a moderation equal to what we are, and which tends to cause us to descend towards that which is not of so much worth as ourselves. Pride sought to ascend; humility seeks to descend. Pride implied hatred of superiority, hatred of equality, and contempt for inferiority; humility contains within itself love and respect for superiority in those whom Providence has made our superiors, love and respect for equality in those whom Providence has made our equals, love and respect for inferiority, not only in those whom Providence has made our inferiors, but even, and in an absolute manner, in ourselves. Pride aspired to be first; humility aspires to the lowest rank. Pride would be king; humility would be servant. A sentiment surpassing belief, which had not even a name in the language of men, and which has made for itself a name, a history, and a glory!

I say a glory; for do not believe that the ultimate object of humility was to abase you; its object was to elevate you. No other doctrine, gentlemen, has pretended to

exalt the human soul so much as Catholic doctrine ; no other has proposed to it a higher and more extraordinary ambition. It speaks to the soul only of its divine origin and of its divine ends ; it substitutes for it eternity and immortality ; it gives God to it for a brother, and heaven for a country ; it inspires the soul with such great respect for itself, that the slightest violation of justice and of conscience causes it to feel horror, and that it would try in vain to live in peace when the slightest stain had compromised the splendor of its personal dignity. Thus, the highest exaltation of the soul should be allied to, and is in Catholic doctrine allied to, the most profound humility. How is this ? How can an ambition without bounds be compatible with an aspiration quite contrary ?

I might, gentlemen, leave this explanation untouched, since I treat only of the phenomena of doctrine : however, it is not unprofitable for us, from time to time, to touch the internal secret of things. Let us then remove the apparent contradiction which pre-occupies us, and let us penetrate even to the essence of humility. Be assured, gentlemen, the true elevation is not in the elevation of nature, in the material or external hierarchy of beings. The true elevation, the essential and eternal elevation, is the elevation of merit, the elevation of virtue. Birth, fortune, genius, are nothing before God. For, what is birth before God, who is not born ? What is fortune before God, who has made the world ? What is genius before God, who is the infinite mind, and from whom comes to us that small extraordinary flame which we call by that grand name ? Evidently it is as nothing to Him. That which is of value before God, that which draws us towards Him, is personal elevation, due to an effort of virtue, which, in whatever rank of nature we have been placed, reproduces in the soul a real image of the Divinity. Now, the more virtue exalts itself from a lowly

place, the more is its merit great. To imitate God, when we touch the first steps of His throne, when He is seen almost face to face, is an easy merit; but if a creature placed in an inferior rank, if a simple man, without birth, without fortune, without genius, bent over the tools of a workshop, and occupied about the most lowly kinds of labor—if that man, by an impulse of his heart, elevates himself even to God, if he draws from his soul streams of pure love, if, although so far removed from God, he offers to Him an image of Himself, assuredly his abasement in the hierarchy of nature will increase his elevation in the hierarchy of merit. Humility does not then exclude exaltation; it serves it; and much more even, it produces it. For what is the virtue which constitutes the hierarchy of merit? The virtue is evidently no other thing than self-devotion to others; nor can self-devotion be practised without abnegation of self. Can self-sacrifice be accomplished without the first sacrifice being that of pride? For what is pride but self; always self; self above all others; self above the whole universe; self above mankind; self above God? What is pride but selfishness itself? And as selfishness and virtue are two words which exclude each other, it follows that pride and virtue exclude each other also; so that it may be clearly seen that virtue and humility have but one and the same definition; so that to become humble is to become exalted. Pride is but the form of selfishness, the passion of nothingness which draws itself together in itself, and would oppress all the rest; humility is the form of love, the passion of the being who is really great, who would become of no account in order to give itself more entirely. Therefore God is the most humble of beings; He who is without equal, has equals in the triplicity of the divine personality; He who is immeasurable height, has abased Himself towards nothingness to create being, towards man to take his nature



upon Himself. It is of Him much more than of the Roman emperor that the poet should have said :

“Et monte sur le faite, il aspire a descendre.”<sup>1</sup>

Such is, gentlemen, the sentiment which Catholic doctrine has pretended to impose upon man with regard to himself. In this has it succeeded? I appeal to you as judges. Has it really created humility in man? Has it induced man to descend voluntarily? You all know it; the history of Catholicism is known to you; you know what sentiments animated the saints, what sentiments you yourselves are inspired with by the Church. It is Catholic doctrine which has inaugurated in the world the sincere love of superiority; it is Catholic doctrine which has produced the sentiment of equality and of fraternity, according to the saying of the apostle: *Diligite caritatem fraternitatis*. Finally, it is Catholic doctrine which has given to us the inclination to make ourselves little, to descend from rank, from birth, from fortune, from the *éclat* of genius; the celebrated examples which kings themselves have given, and which numberless souls unknown to the world still give daily, imitating the humility of Calvary in the midst of that terrible pride which still reigns in humanity, although it reigns no longer over humanity.

Now, gentlemen, it remains to be seen what we shall conclude from this.

Humility is a virtue. It needs to be shown, for the ulterior consequences to which I desire to arrive. Humility, I say, is a virtue; for virtue is a power of the soul which resists evil and which produces good, and humility bears along with itself all these characteristics. It is a power, since it surmounts the inclination of our nature towards the selfishness of pre-eminence; it resists evil and accomplishes good, for evil is a false relation, and good a true relation

<sup>1</sup> And standing on the summit, he aspires to descend.



of sentiments and acts with beings: Whenever we are in exact, just, harmonious relation with beings, not by the mind: that would be the phenomenon of knowledge: but by the heart and actions, we are in good. Now, pride being a false, an inhuman, an unfortunate sentiment, a sentiment which perverts all our relations with the hierarchy of beings, it manifestly follows that humility, which replaces us in a real, humane, and happy relation with regard to beings, is a virtue. Pride troubles all beings, beginning with itself; humility appeases all beings, beginning with itself; it is the chief virtue, as pride is the chief vice.

That established, I say that truth, and truth alone, is able to produce virtue, and that error is absolutely incapable of it. In fact, error places our minds in a false relation with beings; it presents them to us as they are not, and consequently falsely solicits our heart. How could the heart, being falsely solicited by beings which are presented to it in a light which is not their own, arrive at a just sentiment, and the will at just actions? This is not possible. You know very well, gentlemen, that the sentiment follows the perception of the mind, and that actions follow the impulsion of the sentiment. Thus the hierarchy of our interior and exterior activity is constituted. Man sees, in the first place, and according as he sees, he feels in the sensibility sympathy or repulsion: and according as he feels sympathy or repulsion, he commands within himself by the will, and then he acts outwardly. But if the starting-point in that series of actions of the active organization, is faulty; if, for example, I regard as bad that which is really good; if I regard God as a tyrant, instead of regarding Him as a father, is it not true that my sentiment, solicited by that false idea of God, will be one of hatred, whilst if I entertained the true idea of God, if I understood the first words of the Christian who prays, "*Our Father who art in heaven,*" is it not true that my

sentiment would gravitate towards Him under the form of filial affection ?

You constantly wonder at seeing men who are good and endowed with excellent qualities, whose sentiments and actions in certain matters strike you with painful stupor ; you say to yourselves : How is it that these men, who appear to be just and good, are capable of writing or of doing such odious things ? Ah ! gentlemen, it is because they see badly. Do you believe that the heart is always as guilty before God as it appears to us to be ? Do you think that, living in the midst of a society in which the mind is unceasingly besieged by error, the responsibility of sentiments and actions is the same as in the times when truth alone instructed and governed the world ? From time to time, Christians, your honor is persecuted by public calumnies, and you say : There is but one pen wicked enough to trace such injuries. Undeceive yourselves ; it is, perhaps, honesty of intention which attacks you, and almost certainly it is error ; error more or less culpable, according to the disasters of the times and the multiplicity of the causes which have drawn the mind aside. That which you call a thrust of a poniard, is often the stroke of a sword for him who assaults you. He does not know the Church, the city of saints ; he perceives it through the tempest of the age, as an obstacle to that which appears to him to be the regeneration of ideas, the future of the world, the development of civilization ; he sees just the reverse of what you see ; and, consequently, he does just the reverse of what you do. Error, gentlemen, error ! behold the most fertile source of evil, and, in all cases, a source from whence can come no good, no virtue. I have proved this.

Would we then know if a doctrine be truth ? we have but to see the sentiments and the actions which result from it. All doctrine which produces virtue is necessarily true ; virtue is the inimitable fruit of truth.

Well, then, humility is a virtue; a virtue substituted for the worst of all vices; a capital virtue, which creates authority, fraternity, the holy love of the poor—which ranges man each in his place, even to the last, with his own consent. Catholic doctrine, then, of which humility is the effect, is a great truth—a great, a first, a capital truth.

But, gentleman, this is not all! truth alone is not sufficient to produce virtue; truth may be ineffectual for this great work, although it is essential to it. Truth by teaching us the real relations of beings, is without doubt the first germ of virtue; but this germ may become abortive, if it does develop a sentiment in the heart; and it is not the same thing to impart sentiments as to impart ideas. I know how ideas are imparted. Man opens his lips, which God has blessed; he speaks; he exposes a series of propositions which contain light; this light passes from his mind to the mind of him who listens. But to see, is not to feel; to pass from the act of vision to the act of sentiment, is to pass from one region to another. Light no longer suffices to explain this new phenomenon. Every day men see and remain insensible. I go into the street; I meet a poor man who extends his hand to me; I see his misery plainly but my heart may remain closed. I see plainly that the relation between that man and myself is a relation between poverty and riches, of one who asks from me, and whom I am able to pity and comfort; nevertheless I pass on, without blessing him with a look, or from my heart, or with my hand. I possess truth with regard to that poor man, but I have no charity. Who will impart charity to me? Evidently another power than that of truth, but a power, notwithstanding, which will be united to truth, as heat is united to light; a power capable of moving me, of touching my heart, of enrapturing me. Thus you may speak to me of country. Every-

body knows what country is. But when an enemy is there, when it becomes a question of shedding one's blood to defend it, and often blood which we believe to be shed in vain, because the weakness of the heart willingly represents the sacrifice to us as a thing which will not succeed; well! what would then be necessary to induce us to decide? We should need a sympathetic inspiration with regard to our country to fall from some hand, to come and animate that cold heart, to draw from it the blood which it would preserve. Sympathetic inspiration is necessary to cause truth to pass on to the state of sentiment; as long as the sympathetic inspiration does not act, it is impossible that the sentiment could be produced. From thence arises so often the impotence of language; it enlightens without conveying heat, because the orator is himself cold; because he is not sufficiently charged with sympathetic electricity; and because no one can communicate that which he does not possess.

A doctrine which does not contain any inspiration which is sympathetic with the heart of man, is then a doctrine sterile for virtue, whatever may be the amount of truth which it might otherwise contain; and, on the other hand, whenever a doctrine agitates and transforms the heart of man, it is manifest that it is sympathetic with it to the highest degree, and that, in consequence, it is true, not only for the mind but for the heart. Now Catholic doctrine has given birth in man to the unknown sentiment of humility; it has struck, like Moses, the rock of his pride, and has rendered him meek, simple, obedient, contented with the lowest place; it has performed a miracle which has required the most surprising sympathetic inspiration: it is then true for the heart as well as for the mind.

This is not yet all: there is something else in virtue than truth known and felt; the power which acts is also



found there. Truth may be seen, it may be felt, and, nevertheless, the energy necessary to long for it and put it into practice may fail us. This is even most frequently the case. That which we are all most deficient in is strength, the *vir*; it is that men cannot write upon the base of our statue, as they wrote upon the base of the statue of a celebrated man, this simple inscription: *Vir*. Feebleness is the calamity of our nature which is the most difficult to cure. We even see truth quickly enough; we love it without too much difficulty; but its definitive transformation into virtue, the last act, without which man is wanting even to his name, this is the effort which is as rare as it is supreme. Well, then! Catholic doctrine, which has given birth to the idea and the sentiment of humility, has also created its power. It has really made men humble by acts as much as by ideas and sentiments; it has produced the virtue of humility in its total substance. And seeing that nothing gives that which it has not, it is beyond all controversy that Catholic doctrine possesses the power which makes men humble. But what power and of what kind is it? Evidently it is a power which is not in nature, which is superior to nature, since the pride dethroned by humility is natural to man, and that, therefore, humility not being natural to him, a power was absolutely necessary, in order that man should receive and practise the doctrine, which did not come from his nature, consequently a divine power, seeing that we know but two kinds of power—that of nature and that of God. Catholic doctrine then, which is already proved to be a truth recognized by the mind—a truth recognized by the heart—is also a divine truth.

I shall confirm this conclusion in proving the incapability of all other doctrines to produce in man the virtue of humility.

Beyond the pale of Catholic doctrine there exist only



three kinds of doctrine : Rationalism, Protestantism, and the forms of worship which are not Christian. I might pass over the forms of worship which are not Christian, because from henceforth in the world their days are numbered, and because the final struggle is evidently, for the future only between Catholic doctrine, Rationalism, and Protestantism. For this reason, if our time grows short, we shall say but a word of the other form.

Rationalism is the effort of the intelligence to explain to itself the mystery of destinies, by itself alone, without the help of any revelation, of any tradition, of any authority. This term, gentlemen, is a modern term. The Catholics of the nineteenth century have created it ; and it is a term of most happy creation, because it is a term full of equity. When Rationalism, that is to say, that abstraction of all revelation, of all tradition, of all authority, established itself in the world, Catholics found themselves embarrassed ; they could not call that effort of the intelligence by the name of philosophy, for they themselves have a system of philosophy ; there exists a Christian, a Catholic philosophy. To apply to Rationalism the term philosophy, was to give it a name which in the eyes of Catholics, had become sacred, and to transfer it to a species of speculation quite opposed to their doctrine and to their customs. Some apologists called the modern philosophy by the name of *philosophism* ; but that expression, hazarded here and there, was unable to obtain generality or stability, precisely because it contained an injury. Whoever said *philosophism* said a love of *sophism* ; now a man may be Rationalist by education, by a turn of mind, by any calamity whatsoever ; he may seek in himself, in his intelligence, for the explanation of the mystery of destinies, and not necessarily have a heart devoted to *sophism*. The term was then unfortunate. The Catholics of the nineteenth century have created that of Ration-

alism, which has now passed into all the languages of Europe, the inevitable sign of a well-applied term. And the term is well applied, because it expresses without any injury what it desires to convey.

Rationalism has not even the pretension of inspiring humility. It sees the wound of pride; I believe that it sees it; it seeks in modesty a counterpoise to that evil sentiment of our nature; but modesty is but the artistic imitation of humility; it hides pride without destroying it; it hides pride, because pride is a vice so inimical to mankind that it is impossible for man to exhibit it to full view. Be the greatest man in the world; have upon your brow all the glory imaginable; if pride appear above it, you are hated and despised. The world confers glory only on condition that he who bears it must do so without being dazzled by it, and in appearing to be even greater than the glory. This is why modesty is an art of the first order, which Rationalism must necessarily appreciate. It does even more.

I acknowledge that there exists not only a false modesty, which is but a veil to hide pride, but that there also exists a sincere modesty, a certain calm, a moderate self-possession, which causes a man, having attained to honorable rank, to end by being contented with it. But this is only a virtue of a privileged sage—a virtue of the cabinet and drawing-room, which does not penetrate into the heart of man, which is but the appeasing of a satisfied pride, which measures by prudence the emptiness of ulterior desires. Rationalism has not any part even in that light slumber of pride, it is the production of a temperate nature, and not the result of that doctrine which, in making of the individual intelligence the exclusive principle and rule of truth, is the creator of a special pride, which is the strongest of all. The vulgar among men aspire only to the pre-eminence of birth, of fortune, of genius, of glory,

of power; the rationalist, capable of disdaining all that, places his throne still higher, and will see, without astonishment, the day when, by a logical conclusion, he will esteem himself God, or *the Absolute*.

Protestantism is the effort of the intelligence to place itself in possession of revelation without the help of any authority. From whence you see at a glance that Protestantism is no other thing than mitigated Rationalism. Rationalism sets itself up as the independence of thought, as desiring to draw truth from it: Protestantism, in accepting revelation, desires, however, to enter into relation with the Divine Word by the individual effort of the mind. It will not permit man to be between itself and God, because man abases man; a religious pride which ruins spiritual society, as ordinary pride ruins human society. Thus, the men and the works of humility, so frequent in the Catholic Church, have never appeared in Protestantism; and, in addition, the Christian character under this relation has been visibly changed in Protestant nations. If you have ever approached a population formed by that doctrine, you have easily perceived, by the language and by the physiognomy, that you had quitted the frontier of humility to enter into a region tinged with pride. Nothing is more notorious, for instance, than the hereditary sullen pride of the capital of Calvinism.

England, that country for which we ought all to pray, because, although it has been for three centuries estranged from Catholic truth, and has shed the blood of numbers of our brethren, the dawn of a purer day rises for it. England also presents to us, from the first glance, the sensible decline of Christian humility. I do not say this with any bitterness; it is permitted even to charity sometimes to see the brow of the fallen angel, in order better to know the sign of truth in its obscurity or in its decline.

Would you then see the effects of a false doctrine in a great country? Observe the state of domesticity in England! Can anything more cold, anything more distant, or less human, be seen than the intercourse of the English with their servants? The divinity of the domestic is no longer known there; it is no longer known there that Jesus Christ was the first servant of the world. The contempt of man has re-appeared with the perversion of Catholic doctrine, and the sight of it is still more instructive when, carrying back our thoughts into the cherished recollections of our country, we remember what, with us, were the servants—the men of the house, the old man who had formerly held us on his knees, the nurse who nourished us; what support and what respect they found in the old mansions of the feudal times, and in all the sainted dwellings of the very Christian kingdom. These customs, no doubt, are no longer ours, at least to the same degree; but what has changed them but the decline of faith, but the invasion of Rationalism, and of all those doctrines which drive man back again towards pride, whilst talking to him of fraternity. Human teaching, whatever it may be, does not suffice to substitute in the organization of man the artery of humility for the artery of pride. It may be wished, were it only for the sake of modesty, to imitate the ideas and the sentiments of true Christianity; but even that imitation, by its impotence, shows that there is in Catholic doctrine a seed which alone has received the gift of efficacy, and with it the inalienable sign of divinity.

As to the forms of worship not Christian, I shall decidedly say nothing about them. They are dead bodies upon the field of battle, where error and truth contend for the world. What should I say of Jupiter, of Mercury? Greece, Rome, and Mahomet himself, were flatterers of the passions of man. What more should I say of them



with regard to humility? When victory has buried beneath blood and ruins those whom it had swept away, would you desire an orator some day to come and sing upon those *tumuli* the song of triumph, and prove that the dead men lying there had neither truth nor virtue? All doctrine other than Catholic doctrine flatters the corrupted pride and inclinations of man by one point or another, Zeno as well as Epicurus; and if any doctrine from the hands of man were to be met with which had all the architecture of truth, it would still prove by its powerlessness, that truth is not enough when it is a question of virtues stronger than man.

Your highest treasure, Christian youths, is then that of humility, a treasure which procures you peace; a treasure to which you owe brethren and friends whom pride would never have given you. There, I say, is your highest treasure, and your greatest personal treasure; but it is also your treasure for mankind, and for our dear and common country. You will distribute it to each other; you will again make known to those generations tormented by ambitions which will not be satisfied, that which a living statesman has called the holy school of respect, and I add, the holy school of respect in love, and of love in respect. You will teach them again to respect and love superiority; to respect and love equality; to respect and love inferiority. You will reconcile ranks and conditions among them, not by vain phrases, but by profound sentiments, by acts in which the poor will recognize his greatness, and which, by drawing him nearer to men, will also draw him nearer to God. Applied to that glorious task, which only belongs to you, you will not let yourselves be moved by the clamors which will accuse you of transgressing against God and man; you will oppose to them the same treasure of humility, you will yourselves derive from it the joys of pardoned injury. Sooner or later the world



will stand in need of you; the trial of doctrines which are not yours will be completed before the open eyes of the human race. You have only need to wait, and patience is also the fruit of humility! Unique sons of that virtue, holy patriots of time, because you are so of eternity, ascend to the capitol, and there, holding fast the sceptre of a reed, the forehead crowned with thorns, the shoulders burdened with the bloody purple, remain erect before all outrage, and wait calmly for the future which seeks you, and which will find you, not a future of repose, but a future in which the number of those will increase, who will believe, who will love, and who will suffer with you; for as long as the kingdom of God shall be the kingdom of humility, glory will never be without humiliation, victory without defeat, joy without grief; you are like the ocean, whose legitimate ambition is to enlarge its shores, but who knows also that in increasing them it increases its tempests.

## TWENTY-SECOND CONFERENCE.

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OF THE CHASTITY PRODUCED IN THE SOUL BY  
CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

You have comprehended the strength and fecundity of the ground upon which we now stand. We have left the speculative region of ideas to enter into the practical region of sentiments and virtues, and consequently, between the ground on which we first stood, and that upon which we tread at present, there is the difference between that which is verified only by the mind, and that which is verified by the most accessible realities ; and if you have well seized my thoughts, you have also comprehended that there are virtues reserved as signs of divine doctrine. For, gentlemen, you perfectly feel that if there is a divine doctrine ; if it is true that God has deigned to establish upon earth a teaching which has fallen from His lips ; if, since He is in the world, that is to say, since He made the world, He speaks with a loud and with the still small voice, to the whole universe, and to each soul which He has created ; if this be true, you see clearly it is absolutely necessary that the divine doctrine should produce something which human teaching can never produce in its turn, however desirous it may be to counterfeit these all-powerful signs. God, gentlemen, has then

reserved to Himself truths, he has reserved to Himself virtues, He has reserved to Himself institutions; and the great proof of Christianity, its popular proof, the daily bread of its demonstration, is not the miracle which occurs, even when the dead are raised, nor is it prophecy, although prophecy is more permanent than the miracle: no, the perpetual and living proof of Christianity is, that a little sooner or a little later, every eye will discover therein truths, virtues, and reserved institutions, that God has acted like a great king, who, besides the external magnificence of his palace, possesses within, in more secret places, particular treasures, the sanctuary of which he only reveals to his most cherished friends.

The first of these reserved virtues, as we have said, is humility. God alone, by Catholic doctrine, makes the humble; all human doctrines, without exception, from Plato to Kant, all engender pride. You will recognize them by that infallible criterion. When pride rises in your heart on reading a book, or on listening to language, say to yourselves: It is possible that truth may be there, but it is a truth which man has declared. And every time, on the contrary, when reading a book or hearing language you feel humility to descend into your soul, were it the lowest mendicant who had signed that book or pronounced those words, say to yourselves: It is God who communicates with me. That rule has no exception. And remark attentively, gentlemen, that humility is not, more than any other reserved virtue, a mystic virtue, useful only to the cenobite hidden in his cloister, under an austerity which the world calls chimerical. No, when God wills to produce signs, he does so more perfectly. Humility, as well as all the other reserved virtues, is an earthly virtue, a moral virtue, a social virtue, a virtue of which man stands in need, which he is seeking, which he wants every hour, and from the want of which he suffers cruelly.

Without humility all hierarchy is impossible ; for hierarchy is formed of subordinate degrees, of which some are first and others last, where all depend upon and stand reciprocally in need of humility, whether for accepting their position when it is inferior, or for causing it to be accepted when it is superior ; no combination would be able to replace in that position the fraternal oil of humility, and, without its help, hierarchy is nothing else than tyranny by the higher, revolt by the lower ranks, a hatred which remounts and descends again under the protection of necessity.

I add only these few words to my last Conference, and I pass on to a second reserved virtue. That second reserved virtue is chastity. I shall show you that man has not been able to produce it, and that Catholic doctrine has succeeded in producing it. I hope, gentlemen, that with the Divine assistance, I shall not pass the bounds of my ministration, and that you will also elevate your hearts to the purity which is rightful on such occasions. In the age in which we all live, it is permitted to us to see, by the light of austere language, things which are buried in the most profound depths of humanity.

The soul is not alone in man ; it is united to a body, and the body of man is not like that of an animal, it is not regulated by unchangeable instincts, which keep it within the limits consistent with the ends of its destination. Our whole body is, more or less, in revolt against the soul, which ought to direct it. Yet the soul governs sufficiently well certain of those springs which we call the senses : by the power of nature, in aid of an honest and spiritualist philosophy, it is able to hold sufficiently fast the reins of a great part of its administration. But there is a singular sense, the only one which is not at all necessary to the maintenance of life, and which remains deprived of its functions, even of its legitimate functions,

without prejudice either to the action or to the development of our organization ; and this sense, which should naturally be the most easy to govern, since it is free to perform or to neglect its duties, is the one even which is in permanent revolt against the soul, by a mystery which I cannot now explain, of which I am ignorant, if you will, but which is the greatest mystery of our nature, because it touches the most profound depths of the question of good and evil.

The sense of which I speak is not only in revolt, it is depraved.

I call that sense depraved which does not trouble itself about its true functions, but which acts by an instinct of selfishness foreign to its destination. It is manifest that this is a depravation of the natural order, because nature tends always to a just, a determined, and an efficacious end. Now, the sense of which I speak does not disturb itself about its end ; its end is perfectly foreign to it. That which it seeks is itself, is a satisfaction independent of all good from which it should derive its utility and sanctity ! Whereas all the other senses operate in the direction of life, even when they are abused ; whereas sleep brings us repose, food strengthens us, our ears hear the word, our voice utters it ; in a word, whereas all our senses, even in their excess, accomplish something genuine and true, this sense does not cease to conspire against our life. It fruitlessly wastes our most precious organs ; it devours without object our most admirable faculties. Have you not met with some of those men who, in the flower of their age, hardly honored with the signs of virility, bear already the marks of time ; who, degenerated before having attained the entire birth of their being, their forehead charged with precocious furrows, their eyes vague and become hollow, their lips powerless to represent goodness, drag on under a sun hardly risen a worn-



out existence? What has produced these *cadavres*? What has touched that youth? What has taken from him the freshness of his years? What has stamped upon his face ages of shame? Is it not that sense which is an enemy to the life of man? Victim of his depravity, the miserable man has lived in solitude; he has aspired only to selfish excitements, only to those terrible pulsations from the sight of which man and heaven turn aside; and see! he goes on, intoxicated by the wine of death, with a gait which excites scorn, to bear his body to the tomb, where his vices will sleep with him, and will dishonor his ashes even to the last day.

Ah! if this is not a depraved sense, what name shall we give to it? A still harder name, gentlemen, for I add that it is an abject sense. It is an abject sense, because it destroys the heart, because it substitutes the emotion of the blood for the emotion of the soul. I have already seen in my life many young men, and I declare to you that I have never met with tenderness of heart in a young man addicted to debauchery. I have never met with loving souls but in souls who were ignorant of the evil or who struggled against. In effect, once habituated to violent emotions, how should the heart, a plant so delicate, which is nourished by a few drops of dew falling here and there from heaven for it, which is moved by faint breezes, which is rendered happy for days by the remembrance of a word which has been addressed to it, by a look which has been directed towards it, by an encouragement which the lips of a mother or the hand of a friend has given to it; the heart, whose throbbing is so calm in its true nature, almost insensible even because of its sensibility, and from fear lest it should have been broken by a single breath of love if God had made it less profound: how, I say, should the heart oppose its soft and frail enjoyments to the gross and exaggerated enjoyments of the depraved

sense? The one is selfish, the other generous; the one lives of itself, the other out of itself: of these two tendencies one should prevail. If the depraved sense governs, the heart decays little by little; it feels no longer the power of simple enjoyments; it tends no longer towards others; it ends by throbbing only to give its course to the blood, and to mark the hours of that shameful time, the flight of which is hastened by debauchery. But what can be more abject than to destroy the heart of a man? What remains there to a man when his heart exists no longer? Nevertheless, the depraved sense does still more; no vice, as well as no virtue, limits its effects to man alone—the one and the other produce in society the rebound of their action. And, under this head, the depraved sense is the oppression and the ruin of the world.

Much is said about liberty, and, for my part, I talk about it as proudly as another; for, God be thanked, there is a liberty which is holy and just, and no word exists in human language which has not its legitimate application. God and the devil make use of the same words, and the devil can no more curse one single word than he can curse a single idea by abusing it. God is the father of liberty; He has blessed it in giving it to man; He elevates before us, by the heads of His Church, its standard always floating and always honorable. I speak then of liberty, and I denounce to you one of its enemies. I denounce it to you from the great tribunal of humanity, there where its duties and its rights, being sustained the one by the other, have constantly found orators and martyrs. I denounce to you an atrocious and ignoble despotism—that of the depraved sense against an entire portion of the human race; for the abomination is not confined to itself, although it exists but of itself: it leaves itself but to make victims, and what victims!

Ah! gentlemen, in quitting this assembly, seek one of

those streets where misery shelters itself; you will not have to seek far. Ascend those sad staircases, behold yourselves before a grand spectacle. Those faces, withered so young, have been beautiful; those limbs, which no longer inspire anything but the temptation of the horror, have been living; those dishonored creatures had brothers and sisters—they have them no longer; nothing now remains to them, not even remorse. Who has despoiled them, crushed them, given them over to misery, to disgrace, to ignorance even of their misfortune? Who? You know well. Coward as well as selfish, the depraved sense does not attack man in his strength, but in his weakness; it does not tempt man who can look it in the face, but basely, like the worm of the earth, it glides into the bosom of those flowers which spring has just opened, and which live but for a day. It solicits that which cannot defend itself; it presents itself to a creature feeble and too easy to mislead—because once it was the first to mislead—it presents itself to that being under the appearance of a heart touched. The hypocrite dares to put his hand upon that region of the soul; he hides debauch and treason under the semblance of love and of fidelity; then, the hour passed, after he has destroyed that which can never be repaired, he abandons it, he goes away, deserting the evil which he has committed, consoling himself with the disgust which he feels by a disgust which is yet but to come. What oppression is there in the world, if this is not oppression; and what ruin, if what I am about to say does not count for ruin?

When you look into the history of our country, and see there all those illustrious names which were its crown: crown of *baron*, crown of *comte*, crown of *marquis*, crown of *duc*—all those old crowns which formed the entire crown of the country, and then, observing those races in the present time, you will find some of them who bend

under the weight of their antiquity ; youths, the sword of whose fathers enlarged the frontiers of the country and of truth, who can no longer do anything either for the one nor for the other, it is not difficult for you to know the cause. Vice has passed into those races, and has corroded their living fibres. It does not even spare nations. A time comes—and for what people does it not come soon or late?—a time comes in which civilized history succeeds to heroic history ; characteristics fall, bodies diminish ; physical and moral force depart at the same step, and in the distance is heard the sound of the barbarism which approaches, and which looks on to see if the hour is come to drive that old people from the world. When that hour has struck, when a country feels itself to tremble before its destiny, what has passed over it ? What breeze has silenced its life ? Ever the same, gentlemen ; death has never more than one great accomplice. That nation is degenerated in the deadly joys of sensuality ; it has shed its blood drop by drop, and not in streams on the fertile fields of devotedness : now there remains from blood thus shed an inevitable vengeance, that which subjects to servitude and ruin all nations in this condition.

Pardon me, gentlemen, if I do not pursue my thought, what matters it ? But I see many young men here, let them then think every time when the tempter attacks them, that it is the enemy of life, of beauty, of goodness, of strength, of glory ; that it is the universal and national enemy. Ah ! gentlemen, if a Tartar were to knock at your door and ask you to betray your country, what would not be your horror ? Yet the depraved sense does no other thing ; the blood which it requires of you, were it not that of eternity, would still be that of your country and of the future.

Great God ! what will the soul do before this enemy ?



Has it received any strength, has it exercised any against it? We have but to consult history: it is history which is about to answer us.

Well, then, the soul is found feeble. It has been able to do something for justice, for prudence, for temperance, even for power. It has made Hannibal, Scipio, Cato of Utica, and so many great men who had the courage to live and die in difficult circumstances; it has made heroes, it has not produced chaste men. And seeing itself thus powerless, as it is necessary to it to live with honor, because it is its instinct, it has driven its delirium even to the point of desiring the honor of the depraved sense. It is not satisfied with liberty, it has not simply demanded of the world that the depraved sense should be free, it has demanded that it should be honored, and the world has consented thereto. Even now, gentlemen, notwithstanding Christianity, the world struggles hard to maintain the honor of the depraved sense. A homicide is reprobated by the world; the profaner of the most sacred oaths, the violater of the domestic sanctuary, the adulterer, moves in the world with uplifted brow. It is on this account above all that the world and the gospel cannot understand each other; the gospel crushes nothing so much as the depraved sense: the world still upholds it, and honors even to the end dishonor itself.

The honor of the depraved sense has not satisfied the soul; it has desired the publicity, the public recognition of it; for, gentlemen, there is nothing really great but that which attains to public recognition: as long as a thing does not bear publicity, it is not at its highest power. Will you believe it, the depraved sense has aspired to publicity, and, thanks to the connivance of the soul, it has obtained it! I can proceed no further, gentlemen . . . . Christian language refuses itself to the simple act of showing the realities which the sun in other times



saw ; but God has permitted that Tacitus and Suetonius should write pages which even to the last day will bear to the knowledge of man the monstrous history of his own depravity. Do you not recollect the spectacle of the Roman empire in its decline ? Do you not again bring before yourselves Nero showing himself to the Roman empire—to the descendants of the great republic ; Nero, the master of so many men, charged on his single head to represent that which an English orator has so admirably well called the majesty of a people ? Nero, the heir of Fabius, of Scipio, of all the consular families, covered with all the purple accumulated by so many virtues and so many ages ! Nero, appearing before the monuments of his country, before its temples, at the Forum, surrounded . . . How could I describe it ? And a whole people looked on, but a people prepared by the most frightful spectacles for this last spectacle.

Will no one come to the help of the soul ? Will no one devote himself to inspire it with a little courage and honor ? Were there no philosophers in those times ? Oh ! there were philosophers—I do not say so sarcastically ; there were men of powerful genius, who knew how to discover great truths, even if they did not discover them entirely. But philosophers have been able to do nothing ; the depraved sense has even had its philosophy : a philosophy has been invented for it ! Not only, gentlemen, has it had its philosophers, but it has even had its priesthood—it has had its priests.

The priest ! that name represents to us a man grown hoary in age and in tradition, who has visited the kingdoms of truth, and travelled over all the shores of error, from whence he has brought back for the benefit of men wisdom above that of time, a mien which nations come to consult, in order to read in it valuable thoughts. Well, then, the depraved sense has had its priests ; has had

priests charged to exercise, as a ministration of holiness, that frightful ministration of depravity.

What do I say! Priests! it has had temples! Temples! great God! When man is fatigued, when he is tired with the business of the day, and can do no more for this life, he turns aside, he knocks at the door of a temple; he falls upon his knees, he prays, he ascends towards God within those walls where He dwells; his soul respires there the hope and the perfume of a better life; behold the temple—and sensuality has defiled it! Sensuality exhibited itself upon the altar to the man who came there to obtain repose from the cruel dreams of life, and said to him: I am the last god!

However, gentlemen, do not commit the injustice of believing that the human race was not ashamed, and that it did not hope to shake off the chain. It did so hope. It had vestals, it knew the term chastity—it had some illustrious examples of it, such as the continency of a Scipio on a celebrated occasion. But these were only faint gleams, desires, apparitions of good; good was vanquished. Man, during four thousand years, remained under the dominion of the depraved sense, even to the time when at last the dial of eternity marked an hour, and that hour said: “A Saviour is to-day born unto you: glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace to men of good will!”

It remains for us to see the effect of this simple saying upon the world, and how it has engendered in it the reserved virtue of chastity.

Rome was the undisturbed mistress of the world; she had gathered together in her bosom all the vices of the generations which she had conquered, and, desiring by a monument to mark the plenitude of her glory and of her religion, she had raised up in her midst a temple to all the gods—her Pantheon—in which the god of depravity

had also its image, its priests, and its incense. Then, one day, some peasants from the valleys of a country without renown, came and halted upon that place where all the gods of Rome were shut up, under the triple protection of time, of victory, and religion. They came; they saw surrounding them all the powers which were there to defend shame and sensuality deified; and, after having made a sacred sign upon themselves, they knocked with their staves at the door of the Pantheon. It opened before them. There all the ancient gods were ranged; all the past errors, all the renowned crimes, all reigned there in marble, in gold, or in ivory. Our peasants bore then against all these only a pure heart. It was in the end the stronger. Chastity set up in the Pantheon its double sign; first, the cross—the flesh of man suffering by a voluntary immolation—and by its side, the image of the spotless Virgin; both of these announced to mankind that the father of the world was not the blood shed in sensuality, but the blood shed in grief; both of these taught mankind that the mother of the world was not fecundity, even when it is legitimate, but virginity—virginity, the sister of youth, of beauty, of goodness, of genius, of strength—the sister and mother of all virtues, and with them of the whole world.

The triumph was great and new. The honor and publicity of depravity were replaced by the honor and publicity of chastity. But a priesthood is necessary to the maintenance as well as to the propagation of all holy doctrine: what should the priesthood of chastity be, but a chaste priesthood? Catholic doctrine has dared this, not for a chosen portion, destined, like vestals, to offer to the world a rare specimen of the virtue, but for all, without exception, for all, in all times, in all places, in all climes. Catholic doctrine dared in this matter to count sufficiently upon itself, to require as the supreme condition for the

priesthood, absolute continency, and to confide itself alone to innocence always preserved, or always re-acquired by repentance. No one, in fact, can give that which he has not ; and chastity alone could enjoy the privilege of engendering chastity.

Well, gentlemen, what say you of it ? Such was the pretension of Catholic doctrine ; has it been realized ? Has it everywhere, among all nations in the earth, created a race of chaste priests, renouncing that which had appeared to mankind during four thousand years, as the indispensable condiment of life ? Has it done this ? And observe, they are not old men, reduced by the chill of age to incapability of doing evil, whom Catholic doctrine has chosen for its priests ; no, they are young men—men in the sap and flower of life—Saint John leaning upon the bosom of his master ; Saint Paul hurrying towards Damascus with slackened rein ; Saint Anthony carrying the spring-time of his life into the desert of Kolsim. Behold the Catholic priest according to the general rule. The Church seizes a youth, full of vigor, whose heart is full of devotion, and whose imagination is attracted. She purifies him in prayer and penitence, trains him by meditation, makes him pliant by obedience, transforms him by humility ; and when the day arrives, she prostrates him upon the earth in her temples, and sheds over him a few words and a drop of oil : behold him chaste ! Those young men will go to the uttermost parts of the earth under the shield of their virtue ; they will penetrate into the sanctuary of sanctuaries, that of souls ; they will hear terrible confidences ; they will see all, they will know all ; a thousand tempests will pass over their hearts. Those hearts will remain ardent, like fire, by charity ; firm, like granite, by chastity. It is by this sign that men will always recognize the priest. He may be avaricious, proud, a Pharisee : his character will, without doubt, suffer from



these shameful vices ; but, notwithstanding, as long as the sign of chastity shall remain upon his forehead, God and men will forgive him much : that which these last will never forgive will be a fault, perchance the shadow of a fault of fragility, so much, in the eyes of all, the priesthood and chastity will be one and the same dignity, one and the same expression of the God who saved the world upon the cross.

Thanks to God, gentlemen, the Catholic priesthood has undergone that trial, it has undergone it during nearly twenty centuries. Its enemies have watched it unceasingly in the present time and in history, they have signalized some partial scandals ; but the entire body has remained secure. The faith of attentive generations does not err in these things ; it believes in a virtue which it has too much tested : it conducts to our feet youth of sixteen years old, hearts of sixteen years, confessions of sixteen years ; it conducts them to us before the whole world, and to the astonishment of the ungodly ; it brings to us the mother with the daughter ; precocious griefs, with griefs grown old, that which the ear of the husband does not hear, that which the ear of the brother knows not, that which the ear of the friend has never suspected. Mankind proclaims by that miraculous confidence the sanctity of the Catholic priesthood, and the fury of its enemies will always break in pieces against that arch which it bears along with itself. They will pursue it, like the army of Pharaoh, even into deep waters ; but the wall, the crystal of chastity, will always rise up between us and them ; they will curse that divine fruit which is born within us, and which protects us ; they will curse it vainly, because the malediction which falls upon virtue, is like that which fell upon the cross of Jesus Christ two days before the resurrection.

Catholic doctrine has produced a chaste priesthood.



Even this is not its greatest wonder. After all, the priest is chosen, he is prepared and consecrated ; but Catholic doctrine also purifies the heart the least disposed, and the least preserved—the heart of woman. It creates holy generations of Christians, living free in the midst of the world, confided to themselves, guardians of their own morals, of general morals, seizing a new empire in society, and creating from respect a love which in antiquity was unknown.

I hasten, gentlemen, I have hastened to arrive even at you, at you, the last and most divine fruit of chastity. For you are guarded even less than women, by nature and society ; a liberty as great as your desires may be has been left to you. You can do all against yourselves, and all with long impunity. Yet the cross has touched you also ; the spotless virgin has appeared to your heart, which is intoxicated with life ; both have taught many of you the blessed mortification of continency, and religion has surrounded itself with you as with a young guard of honor, which defends it better than the bosoms of its martyrs and the sword of its doctors. All of you have not attained, since the first day of God's appearing in your soul, to that virginal splendor ; many of you have lost its primitive robe ; fallen from holy baptism, they have passed under the rod of the passions ; youth has rendered back to them that which infancy had taken from them. Others struggle still against the poison infused into their veins, they elevate their supplicating desires towards God ; they learn in the combat itself, by knowing better the infirmity of nature, to discern in virtue the hand which alone heals and alone restores.

Thus, gentlemen, a chaste priesthood, chaste women, chaste youth, such is the work of Catholic doctrine in the midst of a world which doubtless has not ceased to be corrupt, but which, even in those who revolt against the

yoke of sanctity, still receives its influence, and leaves no room to any man of sense for confounding the general state of Christian society, under this head, with the morals of Pagan society.

I do not to-day inquire into the logical consequences of so strange a transformation; you already foresee them. You foresee what an account I shall require of human doctrines in the name of chastity, not only of past doctrines, but of existing doctrines. Our conclusions will be still more triumphant than those which we draw from humility; for humility is a virtue which does not manifest itself as much as that of chastity; neither has pride any wounds so visible as sensual depravity.

I shall conclude by a few words addressed to the Christian part of the youths who hear me.

You live, gentlemen, in a country in which morality and religion were always more closely united than elsewhere. Other nations have received other gifts; ours is that of an inflexible logic, which concludes in acts that which it concludes in thoughts. France will never have any other religion than a religion expressed and defended by a high state of morals. It is its instinct, and one of its titles to glory. Be faithful in this, gentlemen, and weigh well the consequences of your virtues; the last century only beheld the fall of religion in France, after it had seen modesty perish; the priesthood did not fall until after the disappearance of all the youth devoted to chastity. On the day when that sacred battalion was dissolved, there was an end of the ancient and holy kingdom. You have resuscitated, gentlemen, that young and sacred guard of truth; it is our best augury, the safest foundation of our hope, the most glorious banner which floats for us. Religion conjures you in the name of a tottering world to preserve and add to its lustre.

## TWENTY-THIRD CONFERENCE

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OF THE POWERLESSNESS OF OTHER DOCTRINES TO  
PRODUCE CHASTITY.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

CHASTITY is a virtue which has been brought into the world by Catholic doctrine, and which has succeeded to the most general and the most horrible depravity. It is not to be understood that the Christian world is not corrupted ; but that it struggles against that corruption, and that Catholic doctrine has created in it a chaste priesthood, chaste women, chaste youth. And, after having shown you this, by the undoubted light of history, it would seem, gentlemen, that I ought at once to pass on to the conclusions which flow from that establishment of chastity which is so extraordinary. But after Catholic doctrine, other doctrines have hurried forward to dispute its empire, and in divers circumstances they have, more or less, successfully combated with it. It is useful, it is necessary, it is curious to see what these doctrines may have produced with regard to chastity ; it is instructive when virtue is once set up, revealed, established, to consider what doctrines which are foreign to it have accomplished to sustain the parallel under this head. To this, gentlemen, I call your attention to-day. I shall touch upon things more or less present ; I shall approach them with

boldness, with energy, but notwithstanding with consideration as great as the doctrine to which I have given my faith, and which I have the honor to defend before you.

I cannot, gentlemen, pursue one after the other all the theories which history exhibits to us upon the stage of the human mind during eighteen centuries. That would be to lose ourselves in a labyrinth, to convoke before us all the ideas which have traversed the intelligence of man with success remarkable in various ways, or even without success; a labor as prodigious as useless. For it always happens that certain doctrines gain the ascendancy, that they appear above the others with a grandeur which forces us to halt before them, and which sufficiently reveals that which passes in a region less exalted than their own. Now, since the definitive appearance of Catholic doctrine, we have seen but three great doctrinal establishments produced by the side of it—Islamism, Protestantism, and Rationalism. I do not name the Greek schism, although it occupies a considerable place in the world, because the Greek schism, foreign to every real movement, is no other thing than Catholic doctrine in a state of petrification.

Six centuries had passed away since the first preaching of the Gospel. Then, in a part of the globe separated from all the rest by sandy deserts, between Egypt and Palestine, in the midst of a race which descended from Abraham, and which had preserved the glorious tradition of him under the shadow of the most graceful name which has ever designated a country to the ear of man—in Arabia, in fine, a man was born. He came late to found a doctrine; for he came after Christ, when already all the Roman empire obeyed the cross, and the branches of that vigorous tree waxed strong from Syria to Egypt, and to Abyssinia. He feared not, however; he knew the Gospel: on reading it, he saw the moral inferiority of



his country divided between idolatry and the Abrahamic memorials, and, without accepting the yoke of Christ, disdaining the part of heresiarch as well as that of follower, he set himself up between the old world which was expiring, and the new world which sprang up on all sides, hoping to crush both, and upon their double ruin to set himself up as the last preceptor and the unique dominator of the human race. . . . He founded the Islam, which has been properly called a heresy because of certain manifest resemblances to the Christian system, but which is separated from it by the absolute negation of the Trinity and of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and which is in principle only a traditional theism, having for its type, more or less exact, the forms of belief and the manners of the patriarchal epoch. The name of Abraham fills the entire Koran; it is the life of the Islam. . . . It is Abraham whom Mahomet designed to substitute for Jesus Christ; it is by Abraham that he hoped to overthrow at the same time Christianity and idolatry; Abraham was to him what the early Christian centuries have since been for Luther. Mahomet turned back over the past, and chose there a point which he regarded as the true point of time and of truth.

He succeeded, gentlemen; he founded his doctrine, and after twelve hundred years many nations still date their history from his victorious Hegira. But what has resulted from it for morality? . . . What has been, with regard to chastity, the fruit of that memorable foundation? I have no need to tell you, gentlemen; you know the frightful depravity of Mahometan nations, fallen below the manners of Greece and Rome; living, in virtue of their law, in the most licentious polygamy; having abased women in servitude and shame lower than Pagan society had even brought them, and proclaiming excesses which no words could retrace. And do not believe that Mahomet



designed this. No, gentlemen, Mahomet did not design it. Mahomet, like every other founder, designed to elevate his nation, and he has succeeded in doing so in certain things. It is clear that his intention and his pride both purposed to call back into life the transitory civilization of the patriarchs, and polygamy is a demonstration of it as well as the spirit of hospitality which breathes in the Koran. Mahomet had no intention of corrupting Arabia, but he desired to regenerate it, to lead it back to the times of its celebrated and pious ancestors. Why has he not done this in reality? Because he could not. His heart was not pure enough, nor was his arm strong enough to impose holiness and chastity upon the populations whom he pretended to govern. The Arab, like an untamed steed, obeyed his master well, when that master urged him with the pressure of the spur which promised him victory; he dashed forward full of fire, his haunches pliant, his hair erect, to bear down nations under his powerful tramp; but when it was needful to put on the curb of purity, he champed in pieces the rings of steel, and it is found that the doctrine which drove him to the conquest of the world, was a doctrine less strongly tempered than his muscles and his breastplate.

I say but these few words. Look into the Koran, you will not find there the sign of voluntary and calculated depravity. Polygamy was a patriarchal tradition; and as to the vile recompenses which, they say, Mahomet promised in the other world to his faithful followers, if such is the sense which we must give to them, it is a sense too deeply buried in the Islam for us to believe that corruption was its real object, and even the avowed means of its founder. Corruption has risen by the force of things, as it will always rise, in the form of scum, above all human doctrine. What energy has it not been necessary for ourselves, Christians, to exercise, notwithstanding the

blood of the Gospel infiltrated in our veins against Mahometan morals, much more even than against their armies! More than one knight of the Crusades, in bringing back his arms from the East, has also brought back changed morals; and when Frederick II., in the torments of his ambition, let fall these words: "Saladin is blessed—he has no Pope to hinder him from doing what he likes," it was the cry of the Arab and of the Turk, the cry of Islamism, which came from his imperial throat in favor of morals which he had seen and which he longed for.

In fine, we emerged from it, although with difficulty; and some centuries after, Catholic society, always more or less tormented, was in face of another celebrated and fatal period. I will not describe to you the troubles of the Church in those times. Our fathers have done this with courage and simplicity. The Church has no interest in hiding, I do not say her faults, but the faults of her children. She is strong enough to avow their weakness to the universe. This is why I accept upon this point, for the age of which I speak, whatever you may choose to say; as the champion, sick and stretched upon a bed, accepts willingly the injuries of his adversaries who come to see his languid hands and to watch for the signs of death; sure of his strength, he leaves to their curiosity the joy of insult; the deep throbbings of his heart are sufficient against them, and tell him the answer which he will give in the name of life to that death which they hope for him.

However it might have been, there was a man who willed to reform us, and why not? We ourselves only speak about reformation to the world. In the cloisters, upon episcopal chairs, in the apostolic chair, in the first ranks of saints, I see reformers sitting; and wherever men meet, it is necessary at some time or other for that power of reformation to traverse and show itself, as in the ocean, when it has been a long time calm and reveals no

more to vessels which sail upon it its power and their temerity, all at once a wind rises in the horizon, which warns the crews to struggle by science and energy against that enemy which is in fact only a reformer of their sleeping faint-heartedness.

Thanks to God! reformation is then a thing of the Church, and the title of reformer the most glorious which she extends to her children, after that of founder. Sometimes even the one does not give place to the other, and Saint Bernard stands without difficulty by the side of Saint Benedict.

Now, in the sixteenth century, in a corner of Saxony, there was a man who had the idea of reforming us; and certainly, he had more right to do so than any man of his time; for he had received from God a power of eloquence, which flowed from his lips or from his pen with equal fecundity; an ardent soul, capable of retaining by love as well as of subjugating by doctrine; to whose character nothing was wanting to assure the power of his mind. Add to this that he was a monk. The Church had taken him from the age, covered him with a frock, prostrated him in sackcloth and ashes; he had felt the consoling rod of obedience, the joys of humility; and that mixture of a good nature with powerful grace had marvellously prepared him for rendering to others all the gifts of heaven, which had become greater by having passed through his heart. What more? A man of genius, an orator, an author, a monk, all the powers and all the glories in that young hand! Let us leave him to do his work.

He has ended, gentlemen . . . ; but where do I find him again? No longer by the sacred hearth of the cenobitic tent, but by the fireside of a vulgar house, his feet stretched forward towards the domestic fire, a wife beside him! He who was twice consecrated chaste by the unction of priesthood and the oaths of the cloister; he who

had been anointed by the Church, and who had not found the Church pure enough for him ! Behold him married ! and not alone. His language has broken open the portals of the old convents of Germany : it has troubled the long-guarded chastity of the aged, and that still more pure of the young man ; it has dragged from the tomb all the desires of the flesh. God, by Catholic doctrine, had not only trained his priests to absolute continency ; he had inspired the taste for, and imparted the gift of it, to a thousand others. He had prepared for each misery in the world a virginity which should be to it a mother and a sister. That man has destroyed all ; he has withered the priesthood at its very roots, by taking from it the marks of Jesus Christ, which it should, by chastity, bear in its crucified flesh. He has given back to the world the privileged souls which the Gospel had drawn from it, unpeopled the solitudes, where prayer watched under the guard of mortification. All that heart, all that genius, all that eloquence, all that power of soul, all those plans of reformation have ended, not in a universal deluge, but in universal marriage !

The words are not mine, gentlemen ; they are those of Erasmus. You all know Erasmus. He was at that time the first scholar in the world. On the eve of the tempest which was to shake Europe and the Church, "*il faisait de la prose*"<sup>1</sup> with the most consummate elasticity. Men contended in the world for one of his letters. Princes wrote to him with pride. But when the thunder rolled, when it was necessary to become devoted either to error or truth, to give to one or to the other his words, his glory, and his blood, this worthy man had the courage to remain a scholar, and retired into obscurity in Rotterdam, after having uttered a phrase still elegant, but despised. He saw before his death, fruits of the reform which

<sup>1</sup> Expression from Moliere's "Bourgeois gentilhomme."



he had never looked for, and he revenged himself upon it by the words which have just escaped me.

But do you suppose that the reformers intended to arrive there? No, gentlemen; they did not intend it. Do you believe that they desire it now? Do you believe that the Protestant Churches, whatever name they may bear, would not, if they could, aspire to have a priesthood which could combat, by chastity, against the Catholic priesthood? Ah! gentlemen, England alone gives twenty-five millions of francs a year to send married missionaries into all the world: well! I tell you, she would give these twenty-five millions to create a chaste priest. But twenty-five Protestant millions are not sufficient for a work which costs the Catholic Church but a drop of oil. To each his share. Side by side with the Anglican Church, the richest in the world, rises up the Church of Ireland, the poorest of all, which begs its daily bread at the doors of its faithful children: but the Church of Ireland has children who venerate it; priests who share in and who console the common misery; apostles who carry its faith to the extreme ends of the world; and the Anglican Church, in coalition with the Evangelical Church of Prussia, has only lately been able to send to Jerusalem, for their representative at the tomb of the Saviour of men, a married bishop.

Mahomet had founded, Luther had reformed; the eighteenth century aspired to a work yet more complete, newer, and if it be permitted to say so, the most magnificent work which has been attempted by man—it has aspired to the transformation of mankind. Up to that time, mankind had existed based upon religion; the eighteenth century designed to break asunder their alliance, and to establish everywhere the reign of pure reason. “Have we not received from God,” said they, “a reason which emanates from his own? Have we not received from



Him a conscience which is the reflection of His eternal justice? Is not man, as an intelligent and moral being, complete, free, endowed with truth, knowing good and evil, able to direct himself in his course? And if it be really so, if man has a just conscience, true reason, the same in all times and places, what need is there of all those religions which contend for the honor of connecting him to a truth which they reciprocally anathematize? Whilst reason is one, universal, peaceful—religions, the fruit of unaccountable dreams, increase in each age that long list of their varieties, and turn the world into a battle-field, Pagans against Christians, Protestants against Catholics, Lutherans against Calvinists, Greeks, Arminians, Mahometans, Hindoos, races without number, which drag humanity from one side to the other in their bloody swaddling-clothes. Is it not time to restore, or to give unity to mankind, in the case of its having lost unity, or of its requiring a long education in order to merit it?" Such was, gentlemen, the idea of the eighteenth century, and by very rare fortune there met together to put it into execution, a pleiad of superior minds—poets, historians, moralists, romance-writers, lawyers, men eminent in all kinds of literary and scientific creations, capable of destroying and of building up. So many minds were never before seen brought together in one accord; and the fortunate age which produced them, on seeing their concord and their ardor, was able to assure itself that a really providential work had been confided to it, and that it would soon behold its chimerical accomplishment.

Respect, gentlemen, respect those hopes of the human mind, those bold promises, that navigation in the long course of the unknown regions of truth. Respect those Argonauts, who start in full sail to pass beyond the Pillars of Hercules of humanity, and who already see rising before them the Fortunate Islands of the future.

Meanwhile, what does the Church ? The Church seems to grow pale. Bossuet no longer pronounces the oracle ; Fénelon sleeps in his harmonious memory ; Pascal has broken his geometrical pen in the tomb ; Bourdaloue no longer speaks before kings ; Massillon has thrown to the winds of the last century the last sounds of Christian eloquence ; Spain, Italy, France, in all the Catholic world, I listen : no powerful voice answers to the lamentation of the outraged Christ. His enemies increase daily. Thrones mingle in their conjurations. Catharine II., from the steppes of Crimea, after a conquest upon the sea or upon solitude, writes tender letters to the fortunate geniuses of the moment ; Frederick II. shakes hands with them between two victories ; Joseph II. comes to visit them, and deposes the majesty of the Holy Roman empire upon the threshold of their academies. What say you of it ? What say you of the silence of God ? What is he doing ? Already the age marks the day of his fall ; hearken, one o'clock, two, three . . . to-morrow morning they will bury Christ. Ah ! they will surround him with great funereal pomp ; they have prepared a magnificent procession ; the cathedrals will be there, they will march two and two, like the great streams which flow to the ocean to disappear with one last noise. Once more, what say you of it, gentlemen ? It is true God keeps silence, He makes Himself little. He had taken all from His Church, all except Himself ; all except the triumph of error against error itself. Until then, God had never left to error its total development ; He had always destroyed it at one time or another before it became dominant. This time He has let it work even to the end. Let us wait in our turn, and, even before the end, let us observe in morals what were the effects of the triumph of pure reason.

What did chastity, that virgin evoked from the tomb by Catholic doctrine, in the world ? What did she ?

Behold the palace of the very Christian kings ; in the chamber where St. Louis slept, Sardanapalus reposed. Stamboul visited Versailles, and found itself at home there. Women lifted up from the lowest dregs of the world played with the crown of France ; descendants of the Crusaders peopled with their adulation the dishonored ante-chambers, and, as they passed, kissed the reigning robe of a courtesan, bearing from the throne into their houses the vices which they had adored : contempt of the holy laws of marriage ; the imitation of the saturnalia of Rome, seasoned by a degree of impiety which to the familiars of Nero was unknown.

Instead of the *soc* and the sword, the depraved youths knew only how to handle sarcasm against God and shamelessness against man. Below them crawled along the *bourgeoisie*, more or less imitators of that royal corruption, and dragging in their train their lost progeny, as behind the powerful kings of solitude, the lions and such like, smaller and lower animals are seen, who follow them to lick up their share of the blood which has been spilt.

At last the day of God dawned. The old Frank people revolted at so much ignominy ; it stretched out its right hand ; it shook that society, fallen into the apostasy of virtue, and cast it to the ground with one shock, to the puerile astonishment of all those kings who flattered pure reason ! The scaffold succeeded the throne, gathering without distinction all that was brought to it, kings, queens, the aged, children, young women, priests, philosophers, innocent and guilty, all enveloped in the solidarity of their age, and in its triumph over Jesus Christ. A last scene completed the reprisals of God. Pure reason willed to celebrate its nuptials, for it had only celebrated its betrothment on the scaffold ; it determined to advance, to press forward even to its nuptials. The doors of this cathedral were opened by its all-powerful orders ; an innumerable

crowd overran the *parvis*, conducting to the high altar the divinity which for sixty years had been preparing for them. Shall I pronounce its name? Antiquity had had images which exposed depravity to the worship of nations; here it was the reality, the living marble of public flesh and blood. I hold my peace, gentlemen, I leave that great people to adore the last divinity of the world, and to celebrate without mysteries the immortal nuptials of pure reason.

Foundation, reformation, transformation — Mahomet, Luther, Voltaire—all ended in the same result, the more or less complete overthrowing of chastity. Whoever has touched Catholic doctrine, whatever may have been his desires and intentions, has by that very act touched the sacred arch of virtue. I want no other proofs, to arrive at a conclusion, than your personal experience. I adjure you all, gentlemen, to tell me if the poison of the evil has not glided into possession of you with the poison of unbelief? Is not the appearance of this double phenomenon contemporary in your soul's history? Has Rationalism ever served you against your passions? Has it not excused and flattered them? It is Catholic doctrine which has made you chaste; it is the abandoning of it which has marked the epoch of your fall, and every time, when touched by your condition, you aspire towards a purer day, I ask you again, and again I adjure you, to say, to whom are your hopes addressed, and to whom have you recourse? You turn your eyes towards the tabernacles where you have left the recollections of peace and honor; you return to Catholic doctrine, to its priests, to its religious orders, to its confession, to its holy table, to all its pious mysteries of which you have felt the efficacy. I want no more; I confide that last observation to your hearts, and I hasten towards the conclusion of my subject.

Catholic doctrine alone produces in the soul, to the ex-



clusion of all other doctrine, the complete phenomenon of chastity. And chastity is not a mystic virtue, a virtue of the cloister and of the initiated ; it is a moral and a social virtue, a virtue necessary to the life of the human race. Without it, life withers in its sources, beauty is effaced from the visage, kindness withdraws itself from the heart ; families waste away and disappear, nations gradually lose their principle of resistance and expansion, respect for hierarchy dies away in scandals ; all evils, in fine, enter by that door ; all kinds of bondage and all ruins have passed by there. It is their great highway. But I desire yet to show you, although briefly, the necessity of that virtue under another point of view, and you will not be astonished at my persistence, since my conclusions should rest upon these two points, that chastity is a necessary virtue, and yet a virtue reserved by God to the action of Catholic doctrine.

There is, gentlemen, in political or social economy, a question of primary importance—that of the regular development of the population. I do not design to treat of it profoundly, and I have no need to do so. I shall simply remind you that the sources of nature, in their most ingenious development by art and labor, are not in proportion with the increase of the population abandoned to its instincts alone. The Scriptures tell us that one of the maledictions of God upon man, after his fall, was this : *“I will multiply thy child-bearing ;”* and the reality proves to us, that in effect there exists under this head a fault of equilibrium which wants to be corrected. Servitude and the wars of devastation provided for this among the ancients ; Catholic doctrine had provided for it by inspiring families with the esteem, the respect for, and the practice of chastity. It has without doubt succeeded, since the economist of the last century reproached it with keeping the population at a level destructive to its true devel-



opment, and this was one of the arms with which the existence of numerous communities devoted to celibacy was sapped. Now, gentlemen, that arm has turned back against its authors. The increasing billows of the population, of competition, and of misery, sufficiently warn serious men of a great social difficulty, a difficulty increased even by the blessings of civilization. Peace consolidates itself daily in the world; it tends, as the prophet Isaiah announced long beforehand, to become still more stable and more general. At the same time public salubrity makes progress; a more scientific administration removes from us, not only pestilence and famine, but those silent influences which slowly undermine the health of nations. Everything contributes to the increase of the mean duration of the life of men; and already, in fifty years, notwithstanding long wars, France has seen its population following that ascending movement with rapidity. The division of property is also another sensible cause of it; by carrying ease and security to a greater number, it excites them to a more presumptuous paternity. I confine myself to this general view; and I ask myself, where is to be found the remedy for an excess which seems to be foreseen by all? There is one already too well known, too much practised, which, from fear of life, attacks it in its source, and substitutes for chastity a remedy which satisfies selfishness and alarms only virtue. But we cannot reckon crime among the means of logically and morally solving the problems of humanity.

Moreover, it is believed, that a glimpse has been caught of the desire to impose conditions upon the liberty of marriage, and to render its sanctuary less accessible to the poor. But the poor! Who has more need than the poor man of the help and the affections of a family? He is alone in the world; he has nothing for the gratification of the senses and of vanity; he inhabits a damp and mis-

erable place, into which love might still penetrate, because it penetrates everywhere. When he is cold, he takes his children upon his knees, he feels that he is yet a man, since he is a father. Shall that joy be torn away from him in the name of political economy? Shall men deal with him like the hunter who tears away from the she-wolf her young? Religion alone has the right, not of imposing, but of asking from man the sacrifice of family, because God, who alone gives that vocation, renders to the man who consents to it, a father, a mother, brethren, sisters, daughters, and sons.

The entire question remains. It is manifest that, crime being put aside, war, servitude, and all the scourges being set aside, the human race remains with a superabundance of life of which it is hardly possible to form an idea, because it loses in debauchery an immense amount of that life, the surplus of which embarrasses it still. Must social economy, then, call to its help vice and crime, and declare them to be the born protectors of mankind, its necessary providence, and the normal means of reducing its blood to the limits of the possible and the true? Strange circumstance! life embarrasses us; and if some poor girl, weary of the world and despised by it, bears her virginity into a cloister; if by her choice, by her inclination, because God has imparted to her a heart capable of living of itself, she seeks to hide the flower of her youth in voluntary labor and obedience, like the dove which takes its young on its wing and flies away into the woods, there will be found an opinion unnatural enough to tax that flight of a poor girl: who has nothing, who asks for nothing from men but to live in chastity, and to gain her bread in a community of hearts like her own: with political heresy, with the confiscation of a head to the detriment of society. Life embarrasses us; men desire to regulate its increase; they permit it to be lost in

debauch ; they throw it to the winds by crime ; but to concentrate it by chastity, to condense it in the strength of virtue, so that it might flow upon the world by regular, full, and measured channels, is the unpardonable pretension of a doctrine which invades all. They desire the material result of chastity, because it is necessary to the rotation of the social machine ; they will not have virtue, because virtue comes from God, because it is the sign of God, and because the world places in the first rank of its wants, that God should not be too visible.

I resume, in fine, and I conclude. Chastity is a virtue necessary to the general movement of the world, which is unable to replace the effects of it for the distribution of life, except by misery, servitude, crime and immorality. Withdraw all those causes which maintain tolerably well a certain level in the development of the population ; withdraw them in imagination, in order to establish a good and honest course of things in their place, and you will arrive at this conclusion, that a third of the world is called to absolute continence ; and the two other thirds to moderate continence. This is the law. Sooner or later, gentlemen, chastity will retake its place in the midst of the world ; it will seize again upon its rights, its altars will be again set up and honored ; men will recognize that they cannot exist in its absence, and those words which I pronounce to-day will, perhaps, contribute to it. Magistrates, legislators, writers, whatever you may one day become upon the moving scene of the world, the occasion will present itself to you to serve the cause of mankind, by serving the cause of voluntary and devoted chastity. You will be faithful to it, gentlemen ; you will repudiate the heritage of the sixteenth and of the eighteenth centuries ; like Gelon in a celebrated treaty, you will make terms for humanity, not

in abolishing, but in re-establishing the free sacrifice of blood.

Chastity is a virtue necessary to humanity. I start from this point. Now, mankind does not possess that virtue; it had trampled it underfoot up to the coming of Jesus Christ; and whenever it has willed to touch the work of Christ by Mahometanism, Protestantism, or Rationalism, it has only succeeded in more or less destroying chastity, and in renewing even the shameful spectacles of the morals of Paganism. What follows? It follows, gentlemen, that man is not in his true state—in his natural state; for nothing necessary could be wanting to a being who is in the truth of his nature. If man is not in the truth of his nature, he has fallen from it; for if he were not fallen from it, he would be born out of the truth of his nature, out of his nature itself, and that is absurd. Man is then in a fallen state, as Catholic doctrine, in fact, teaches him; and nothing will be able better to demonstrate this to him than what he feels daily, by that degraded and tyrannical side of his being.

But in addition, and this is my second conclusion, since Catholic doctrine restores chastity to man, not only relative, but absolute chastity, it follows that Catholic doctrine is a restorer of fallen humanity, and that by a superhuman power; for if it were by virtue of a human power that Catholic doctrine possessed that efficacy, it would not be the only one to possess it. That which is human is from the domain of man. Why should not man, by another doctrine, obtain the same result? It is not only Catholic doctrine which has said to man: Be chaste; all spiritual doctrines, and they are very numerous, give to it the same order and the same counsel. Why is it that Catholic doctrine alone should add to its teaching an efficacy, a transforming action, which not only operates in the region of the soul, but which reaches the most rebellious of all

the senses, and causes it to be subject to an obedience which it regrets even in accepting? Something which is not of man is evidently in the heart of that unique doctrine in its effects; and that something which is not of man I know only by one name—God!



## TWENTY-FOURTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE CHARITY OF APOSTLESHIP PRODUCED IN THE SOUL  
BY CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

THE third virtue reserved by God to Catholic doctrine is charity. Charity taken in its most general sense is the gift of self. When it regards God, it is the gift of self to God; when it regards man, it is the gift of self to mankind. It is not my intention to treat to-day of charity towards God, but simply of charity towards man; and even under this head I declare it to be reserved to Catholic doctrine, not in the sense that man, abandoned to the impulse of nature, never gives himself up; this I deny; he gives himself up to his family, to his friends, to his country; he gives himself up, in fine, to a certain degree; for if God, beyond the influences of all divine doctrine, had not permitted self-devotion, mankind would not exist a single moment. But although that element is of the highest necessity for human life, yet, in order that the triumph of divine doctrine might be so far assured, God has reserved the expansion and the total donation of man to the action of His doctrine upon souls.

Man is complex; he has much to give; consequently I cannot all at once encompass that history of the gift of self. It is a difficulty for the orator, but a difficulty for

which it is his right and his duty to congratulate himself, since it honors the greatness of his fellow-creatures.

Man is able to give himself in so far as he is intelligence and sentiment, and in regard to his exterior relations ; and, consequently, charity includes the gift of self under this threefold point of view. Man, as an intelligent being, is a doctrine ; and the gift of self, under this head, is no other thing than the gift of the doctrine which forms the life of our minds. Now, I say that the charity of doctrine, that the gift of self, with regard to doctrine, is a virtue reserved to Catholic doctrine. I say that Catholic doctrine is the first which has loved mankind, the only doctrine even now which loves mankind, which seeks mankind, which gives itself to mankind, which devotes itself to mankind. I say that beyond its pale, notwithstanding the pride which excites the inventors of doctrine to spread their ideas and cause them to be adored, they are condemned to an expansion poor, sterile, and without devotedness in the bosom of mankind. First and alone, Catholic doctrine is endowed with the power of giving itself ; first and alone, it has inspired man to give himself with regard to intelligence and truth. This is what I shall show you, if it please God.

When man gives his goods, the land upon which he treads, he gives a great deal ; it is, however, the gift of a thing foreign to himself. When he gives his heart, he gives more ; but that heart, all-precious though it be, is but a changeable and mortal thing : a time will come when it will no longer be able to excite even the emotion which is necessary in order to give itself. Now, there is something in man which, whilst being himself, is more than himself, which neither passes away, nor changes, nor dies : what do I say ?—which is more than immortal, which is eternal. For, Leibnitz has said it, man is a compound of time and of eternity, and it is by truth that eternity

enters into this compound. Daughter of eternity, herself eternal, truth has descended into time in descending into the intelligence of man, and, exposed by that cohabitation to suffer from our nature, she also communicates to us the rights of hers. Whilst everything deteriorates within us, even the sentiments of the heart and the faculties of the soul, truth preserves there its immutable existence; and in imparting truth to others, we give them something which outlives ourselves, which outlives all death, which blossoms in the tomb, which adorns herself with ages as if they were graces added to the youth of her eternity.

This is why, gentlemen, the gift of that part of ourselves is the gift of self *par excellence*, and charity of doctrine is the highest charity—charity so much the more necessary as man does not love truth, as he is unmindful of its blessings, and constantly opposes to it the sluggishness of ignorance and the activity of error. Like an invalid who refuses or perverts the *dictamnus* of life, humanity, that great invalid, perseveringly rejects the eternal draught of truth which God sends to it from heaven. And for this reason, not only the will to give oneself is necessary to doctrine, but the love, the courage, the patience, the heroism of the gift carried even to martyrdom.

And if a divine doctrine really exists, if God has spoken to men, do you not feel that the charity of that doctrine come from God should be beyond all comparison? For if God has given His Word to the world, as evidently He has only given it from love, He should have placed at the foundation of that Word destined for the human race, a science, a devotedness, a power of self-devotion which no other doctrine was able to imitate, and which would cause all other doctrinal self-devotion to be, in comparison with it, weak, inert and dead; He must have willed that the human word should be but as a dried-up torrent, whilst the Divine Word, throbbing full of life and love, should

flow in full stream among mankind, as the course of all the springs and all the streams, divided but united, flows unceasingly upon the surface and in the bowels of the earth to vivify it.

I undertake to show you that it is so ; that all human doctrine, with regard to expansion, is but as a dead body, and that, on the contrary, Catholic doctrine, under the same relation, is a living doctrine, which is perpetually for mankind what a young virgin is for her husband, when she approaches the altar and there takes her first and joyful vows.

Let us begin the comparison by antiquity.

China, India, Persia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, these form, if I mistake not, the whole of antiquity. Well, then, in that antiquity, multiple, vast, long, strewed with events in which so many nations have acted parts known to us, have you ever felt the palpitation of doctrine? Have you ever found the apostolate there, and an apostolate which had the human race for its object?

What has China done for truth? What ships have left her shores to sail towards the world, and to bear a message to it in the name of man and in the name of God? Where are her mandarins? Who has met with them beyond their own limits? Who has heard them? Where is the testimony of their blood to be found? It has been necessary, even in order to know them, to depute men from the extremities of the earth, men whom their pride has rejected, thus refusing their ear to the human race after having refused their lips, equally incapable of instructing or of being instructed.

What has India done for truth? Bound round and round in the swaddling-clothes of her castes, she has done what an infant does who cries loud enough to be heard by its nurse. I hear her voice between Imaum and the sea, and even beyond, but always in a limited circle: her

Brahmins, her philosophers, her schisms, and her heresies, which are celebrated because we study them, have only created for her a local movement, remaining in glory and in effects, even below their fame.

Persia, with its Zoroaster, has done neither more nor better. As to Egypt, an old sanctuary, a land celebrated among all lands, when I penetrate there by a contemporary science, what do I find? Some mummies in caves, pyramids which contain dust without a name, sphinxes by the side of temples, mysterious hieroglyphics, secrecy everywhere, in the heart of the most gigantic monuments as in the depths of tombs. That people feared to speak; and when a *savant* dies after having deciphered three lines of their writing, he dies famous.

But let us turn to Greece: Greece, at least, will speak; the world will hear her voice. Is she not the country of Homer, of Hesiod, of Orpheus, of Euripides, and of so many others? Has not the muse, as a poet has said, given to Greece the gifts of genius and of eloquence? It is true her mouth and her pen have celebrated all. We yet draw from her elegant sculptures in marble; we go there to measure the pediments of her temples; we bring into our museums the stones which she has touched with her inspired finger; tokens of her follow us everywhere: and notwithstanding, with gifts so rare, and that immortal success, what has she done for truth? Where are the traces of her apostolate? Where are her missionaries and her martyrs? She names Socrates; it is her *chef-d'œuvre*. Socrates, who affirms God to some beloved disciples, and who dies bequeathing to them for his last sigh a sacrifice to false gods.

Behold the entire history of the expansion of doctrines in antiquity, if we add Rome, which had nothing universal but her ambition. This history is short, and do not wonder at it; error and truth may be recognized,



even by a single look ; it is God who has given their sign to the one and to the other, and, better than Tacitus, God abridges all.

You have seen death, would you see life ? you have seen selfishness, would you see charity ? Jesus Christ is at the moment of quitting His disciples and the world ; He is about to address to them His last words, His most excellent testament. Hearken to it, it is short also : "*Go and teach all nations.*" Go ; do not wait for mankind, but march before it ; teach, not like philosophers who discuss and demonstrate, but with authority, which takes its own ground, and affirms itself ; speak, not to a nation, not to a region, not to an age, but to the four winds of heaven and of the future, even to the most distant extremities of space and time, and in proportion as the energy or the good fortune of man shall discover new lands, go as fast as his energy and his fortune ; anticipate even the one and the other, so that the doctrine of which you are the heralds may be everywhere the first and the last. What a testament, gentlemen ! There are but three words, but no man had pronounced them. Search where you will, you will never meet with those three words : "*Go and teach all nations.*" There is but one man who has pronounced them ; there is but one man who was able to pronounce them—a man sure of the efficacy of his words. For you can well imagine that when men die desiring to leave something after them, they weigh well their last directions, and that they do not give directions which may eventually be convicted of falsehood or of vanity. An expression as absolute as this, "*Go and teach all nations,*" supposes a certainty without bounds ; the glance of a prophet who, ready to lie down, sees mankind for ever attentive and obedient upon his tomb. Now, these words were spoken by Jesus Christ—the first, the last—alone He pronounced them. Nevertheless, I grant that it is

only a saying; we must see if the accomplishment has answered to it.

Some time after these words were spoken, a singular phenomenon occurred in the world. The universe, that something which flies and which remains still, which suffers and which laughs, which makes peace and war, which overthrows and which crowns kings, which agitates itself without knowing from whence it comes or whither it goes: that chaos, in fine, hears with stupor a sound of which it had no previous idea, and which it does not understand. As in the night, when all is still, we hear near to ourselves I know not what being who passes by, the universe for the first time hears a word which lives and moves, which is at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Athens, at Alexandria, at Rome, in the Gauls, from the Danube to the Euphrates, and beyond them—a word which has travelled further than Crassus and his battalions, further than Cæsar; which speaks to the Scythians as well as to the Greeks; which knows neither strangers nor enemies—a word which is neither bought nor sold, which has neither fear nor pride—a simple word, which says: I am the truth, and there is no other. St. Paul has already appeared before the Areopagus, and astonished those ancient seekers of novelty by his newness: they have created a word to paint their surprise, a happy expression which characterizes the phenomenon of which the world begins to suspect the power: *What desires he from us, say they, this sower of words?* These philosophers had seen men discourse, divide, analyze, demonstrate, make their fortunes and their glory with rhetoric and philosophy; they had not yet seen truth sown in the human race like fertile grain which germs in due time, and requires only its proper nature to flourish and bear fruit.

The thing was accomplished. The Roman empire

could no longer hide from itself the apparition of a new reality which did not come from itself, which became established there without its aid, and already spread beyond its limits. It deliberated. The politicians, the men who foresee and understand events, who know the destinies of nations and have marked out their duration and their end—all these men assembled on the Palatine before Cæsar, to consider and endeavor to understand what this thing was, which, without the permission of the *præfectus prætorio*, had the boldness to march from India to Iberia, even to places where the orders of Cæsar were not known. Let us be just; they saw plainly its power and their own weakness; they knew that mankind possessed no word capable of struggling against the Word which became revealed, and there was nothing left to them but to accept it as a fact which had entered into the destinies of the human race, or to try against it as a last resource the power of the executioner. They chose the latter alternative; for, in order to adopt the other, they would have needed more than genius, they would have wanted humility. The Cæsars made no pretensions to humility. They expected from power that which they did not expect from the doctrinal sap accumulated during forty centuries in the great vessels of humanity. It was no longer for Catholic doctrine to become imparted by the simple effusion of teaching; the empire determined to stifle the word in the voice of the apostolate. There was no choice left but to be silent or die; it was necessary to die believing that blood spoke louder than the word in favor of truth. A precious question even presented itself: was it necessary to love ungrateful and self-destroying mankind even to dying for it? Could they not withdraw from mankind and, peaceful possessors of truth for themselves, leave the world where it was?

But truth is charity, and charity is not the gift of self

to friends, to relations, to fellow-citizens ; it is the gift of self to strangers and to enemies, to all without distinction. The Gospel had foreseen the case, and had provided for it ; it had said : "*Blessed are they who suffer persecution for righteousness.*" It had added : "*Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who makes His sun rise upon the good and the bad.*"<sup>1</sup> And Christ had also provided as to the efficacy of the blood shed in testimony to truth. Had He not in His last moment, and by His last sigh, converted the centurion who guarded His execution ? and, even after His death, did not the thrust of the spear which pierced His side make of the soldier a believer and a saint ? These were prophetic signs ; the fraternity of the apostolate and of martyrdom were here eloquently revealed. They were faithful to it. When the empire required from the apostles their blood to stifle their words ; they knew that blood is language at its highest power ; they died that they might speak louder and more effectually dead than living. It was almost a law that no land ascended towards God which was not moistened with the blood of martyrs.

Now, gentlemen, my task is too easy ; we have no time to lose in easy enumerations. The Roman empire became Christian by the apostolate ; the barbarians also became Christians in their turn by the same means. And when a new world discovered itself to Vasco di Gama and to Christopher Columbus, legions of missionaries hastened upon their steps ; India, China, Japan, islands and kingdoms without number, were evangelized. From the Canadian lakes to the banks of Paraguay, America was visited by the word of Christ ; it dwelt in the forests, upon the rivers, in the clefts of the rocks ; it charmed the Car-

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 5, v. 44, 45.



ibbean and the Iroquois ; it loved and was beloved with an unique ardor by a thousand races lost in those vast continents. And even now, notwithstanding the evils which have decimated it in Europe, and which appeared to have dried up the milk in its breasts, it pursues the distant work of propagation. Oceania, a world scattered about in the sea, received upon the ridges of its islets the doctrine which has converted the great lands ; the ancient missions flourish anew, new ones commence, and blood still flows for truth as in the time of Galerius and of Diocletian. You have this spectacle before your eyes, gentlemen, the charity of Catholic doctrine is not an antiquity of the museum ; it lives among you, it comes from you ; your brethren by country and family, at the moment in which I speak, cover with their voices and their virtues all the points of the globe. The *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* follow in continuation the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* ; these follow the legends of the Middle Ages, and the legends the Acts of the Apostles. Ever day, for the same cause, men are imprisoned, murdered, mangled, and die of heat, of hunger, of thirst, of forgetfulness of the whole world, but unshaken and happy, because they have been chosen to accomplish the testament of Jesus Christ : “*Go and teach all nations !*”

I have no need to insist further ; it is too clear that Catholic doctrine was the first which moved man to the gift of himself as an intelligent being, the first in which truth was charity. I add that even now also Catholic doctrine alone possesses this privilege, a privilege become much more remarkable in the new world than in the old. For formerly it might have been thought that the secret of the apostolate was not revealed, but now that it is manifest, its possession always reserved to Catholic doctrine, to the exclusion of all other, is assuredly a phenomenon as curious as it is demonstrative.



I take again my division which I made the other day. There are, we said, but three great doctrines which have endeavored to dispute the ground with Catholic doctrine—Mahometanism, Protestantism, and Rationalism. I add now the Greek schism.

Mahometanism, appearing six hundred years after Jesus Christ, had seen Catholic doctrine in all the magnificence of its expansive proselytism. It was an existing fact, a fact of which Mahomet in person was witness. Mahomet having set himself up as a founder, was obliged, in his turn, to pronounce the *fiat* of foundation; he also had to say: "*Go and teach all nations.*" And in effect, gentlemen, we must do him justice, he pronounced that *fiat* as loudly as it is given to man to pronounce it. Mahomet dared to pronounce that *fiat* of doctrinal donation, of the expansion of truth, but with a variation which at once reveals man in the place of God. Mahomet has well said: "*Go!*" This was a great deal, but listen to what follows: "*Go and subjugate all nations.*" He appealed not to the word, but to the scimitar! And why? Why did not that man find twelve apostles? Why did he not dare to confide his word, not when he was dying, but in the prestige of all his dominion, to other voices which should outlive his own? Ah, gentlemen, his was an act of genius. Mahomet, like Cæsar just now, saw clearly that when he was dead his eloquence would perish; he saw plainly that when he was dead the prestige of his eagle eye would be gone; and that when men came to look into his sepulchre they would find in the bones of his skull only those inanimate orbs which no longer speak, which no longer promise things to any one. He knew all that. He did not reckon upon his tomb. And again, it was an act of genius and of power. But, as on another hand, he desired to outlive himself, weighing in his ardent hands the future of the world, he comprehended that it

was not well to act like the Cæsars, who had killed fruitlessly, and in whom the sword had been but a negation. He drew his sword as an affirmation. He united his doctrine to the destiny of an immense war, and charged his legions, in dealing their deadly blows, to engrave the Koran upon the heart of mankind. He did with steel what up to that time no one had been able to accomplish with it; he made of it a living doctrine—an apostolate. When man wills to persuade, he opens his lips and his soul. Mahomet opened them once for all; his word from henceforth uttered, he cast it upon the earth as an irrevocable command; he did not say to it: Go! he made his squadrons bear it, and as the world had become silent to hear the profound march of truth, it became silent a second time at the noise of the fame of Mahomet; but it was a silence of slaves, a silence of the vanquished, a silence which dishonored it.

For, gentlemen, what is it to receive a doctrine at the point of the sword but to give up the soul? I esteem even error which has the will, and which believes sufficiently in itself, to try its power to persuade me; but for that miserable gladiator, who presents the Koran to me with one hand and death with the other, I feel nothing but scorn, and if I had the baseness to obey him, I should feel a deeper scorn of myself.

This was, however, gentlemen, the work of Mahomet; thus he propagated his doctrine; thus he imitated that great command: "*Go and teach all nations.*"

I pass on to the Greek schism. This one is no conqueror. Like a subtle academician, separated by the power of mind from doctrinal unity, it came to set itself up in the world, upon the good opinion which it had of itself. What has it accomplished since then in the order of the apostolate? What has that land done which was formerly so fertile in eloquence, which produced Saint

John Chrysostom, Saint Basil, Saint Gregory Nazianzen, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, and which, first of all, sent its glory even to us by Saint Irenæus, one of our first ancestors in the faith? What has it done since the eleventh century, the final epoch of its schism, to justify its separation by its success, and to extend the reign of God of whom it had torn away a precious branch? Alas! what has it done? Nothing. Seven hundred years have since passed away; and that branch, detached from truth, pines away without shoots, strong enough to preserve its old sap, too weak to communicate it. It has broken with unity; and at that moment, by a miracle of divine wisdom, it lost the grace of expansion with the secret of charity. Would to God even that it had stopped there, and that it had accepted the chastisement of sterility! But ashamed at length of its long inaction, the Greek Church has lately been seized with the ambition of proselytism. And do you know how the Greek Church understands proselytism, or rather, who does not know? It despoils Catholics who have fallen into their dependence by the chances of war; it confiscates their churches and their convents; it sends their priests into exile; it drags children from the arms of their mothers in order to enslave them to error, and to spare itself the trouble of converting them at a later period; unknown to the people, it counterfeits its own liturgy, which yet remained too Catholic; it sends its janizaries to solicit apostasy with wines, ribbons, and blows; and, when the thing is accomplished, it joyfully matriculates its new children with the command henceforth never to leave its amiable pale under pain of being treated as apostates. In fine, it tortures truth in its claws—like a bird of prey become master of an eagle which by chance had its wing broken; it holds and torments it, and not having the strength to force a powerful beak into its sides, plucks

out its feathers one by one, and mangles rather than devours it.

Did I not just now name the Church of Poland, gentlemen? I think I named her . . . and if I did, think you that I can pass her by without paying homage to her? Dear and illustrious sister, formerly the support of Christianity, now offered us a holocaust, I, the apostle of Christ, could have pronounced thy name without blessing it, without praying to God to have pity upon thee? Ah! I pray to Him to show compassion towards thee? I conjure Him, I call upon Him to pity thee, and upon every soul in whom humanity is not silenced. We know not the future which is prepared for thee; but if thou fallest in the end, posterity will prepare for thee a cradle, where thou wilt daily spring into life again, and when men would incite themselves to great devotedness in great misfortunes, they will meditate on the remembrance of thee, they will kiss thy ruins. If we do not render to thee the life which is in time, we will preserve for thee the life which is in memory: we shall meet thee in eternity; and if other embracings are no longer permitted to us, that meeting, at least, persecution can never keep from us.

Behold the Greek Church, gentlemen! And have I even said all? Have I spoken of the condition of that doctrine become dead? No, gentlemen, but we must be brief in the history of error, as we have been in that of truth. But one word more. By a law which now governs the entire Greek Church, under the divers dominations which it has undergone, *proselytism is prohibited*. Nero had, perhaps, dreamed of this in a restless dream of the Palatine; but to have written it in a law, to have solemnly decreed—and in three empires—that doctrine should be without charity; that it ought not to seek man and even pursue him; that it should occupy its corner, and be happy and

contented there, under the protection and the guard of a master ; and that if, by chance, like the dove of the ark, it opened the window to see if it could fly away on any side, it was a crime of high treason ; to have pronounced, written, decreed such a law, is assuredly the prodigy of a double fear—the fear of its own weakness, and of the power of truth. And yet, it must be remarked, that it is not only in despotic States that this fabulous order has been consecrated, but at Athens ; in a Charter, and in a Charter which proclaims the liberty of conscience ! It is in the name of liberty of conscience that proselytism is there prohibited !

I am happy, gentlemen, to point out to you elsewhere, in the heart even of Protestantism, a legislation of a very different character, to which it would be impossible for me not to render public homage. When it is our mission to speak against error, it is a pleasure as it is a duty to render justice to that which it does well. Our age has seen, gentlemen, a magnificent reparation made by error to truth, so much the more remarkable as it had been preceded by a long persecution. England, after three hundred years of merciless legislation against Catholics, has of her own accord broken the chains of our servitude, and proclaimed under the name of Emancipation, the full and entire liberty of conscience upon the soil of her vast dominions. She receives our priests, our bishops, our religious orders, even those who have no right there of nationality, she does this without fear and without retrospection, with the highest liberality which the world has seen ; and I should believe that I had betrayed the sanctity of Catholic apostleship, if from this pulpit of Nôtre Dame, before commencing what I have to say of Protestantism, I did not render to that new act in the history of men, the eternal honor which is due to it.

Protestantism is not like the Greek schism, deprived of



all proselytizing ; it writes, it prints, it diffuses its books with profusion. It sends even missionaries, it is true, not to China or to Japan, wherever there is blood to be shed ; but, in fine, wherever its consuls can reach and protect them with the Britannic Majesty, Protestantism risks its sons. It is a real action, but an action which does not constitute an apostolate. Proselytizing by books does not involve any difficult and serious devotedness. Human language marches forward, writing does not ; the gift of speech is the gift of the entire man, writing is but the gift of his intelligence. A thousand sacrifices, without counting that of blood, arise from the sacrifice of human language, very few from that of writing. At his fireside, everything being arranged with perfect regard to comfort, the doors well shut, the windows securely closed, a *gentleman* takes his pen, he reflects at his ease between his morning and evening meals, he writes certain pages, and pays for having them printed, but with the reserve of being paid for them by his bookseller, who pays in his turn the *colporteur*, who is the only one, in fact, who performs an apostolic part. The comparison, gentlemen, is not to be sustained in regard to devotedness, nor is it any more favorable on another point of view.

Proselytism by books requires no virtue on the part of him who exercises it. The lowest wretch, anonymously or otherwise, might be able to wield a powerful although a dishonored pen ; if the writer be ever so little moral, it is sufficient for his dignity. It is not so with the man who devotes himself to the ministration of the word, and above all to religious teaching. It is needful to bear the physiognomy and the history of an elevated life, in order to appear in an assembly in the name of God. Did not Cicero, although a heathen, and speaking with the eloquence only of a civilian, define the orator as *a man of probity, skilful in the art of speaking* ? This

title of man of probity is no longer sufficient to the man of the Gospel ; holiness is needful to him ; holiness, indicated by the permanent sacrifice of chastity, by disinterestedness, by fatigue, by separation from country, by a visible outpouring of truth in the accent and in the whole being. Even savages do not mistake these signs. At the first glance, and the first sound of the voice, they distinguish the true apostle. Shall we carry books, then, to them, or even the teaching of the word wedded to a wife ?

Do you know, gentlemen, what is most extraordinary in your age ? It is precisely that for the first time since the beginning of the world proselytism by the pen, increased beyond measure by the press, has acquired a power which contends against proselytism by word of mouth : it is that the proselytism which requires neither devotedness nor virtues, not even a name, aspires to dethrone the proselytism which requires name, virtue, and devotedness. We do not repulse this new power sprung up in mankind ; we make use of it to our advantage ; useful auxiliary, it is come to the help of the word of mouth, which is everywhere menaced by oppression, and although it lays siege to truth, it still works for us, for that verbal teaching whose empire it covets. For this reason, whilst I point out to you the danger which attaches to the impersonality of writing, I show you also the advantage. When a great power appears in the world, it arrives there impelled by some great reason, and that great reason is always some need of truth. Nothing happens but by the Providence of God, and God does all things for His elect : *Omnia propter electos*. Whether it be, then, that an empire is founded or falls ; whether a sun rises or sets ; whether the wind blows from the east or from the west, always look for God ; it is always God who comes, although the dust raised by His passing may for a long time hide His face and His secret from us.

I shall say but one word of Rationalism upon the question which occupies our attention. I have never heard of a Rationalist who had received blows in Cochin-China. Those geniuses are too polished and too skilful to expose themselves to such a glory for truth. It will then, at all events, be soon enough for us to trouble ourselves about them at the time of the next vacancy at the *Académie*. We are too well-bred to offer them anything but a branch of laurel, and without doubt they merit it.

I have done, gentlemen. What I have said authorizes me to conclude, that the charity of doctrine, shown by apostleship, belongs exclusively to Catholic doctrine. And if you ask me why, what is the hidden cause of this phenomenon, I shall say in answer, that truth alone is charity, and that, as we alone possess truth, we alone possess its incommunicable ardor. We come from the expansive and universal bosom of God; we come from the region where light and love hold themselves eternally in each other's embrace. The stream which descends from the high mountains, naturally covers the plain with its thousand channels. All other doctrine comes from below; it comes from man, from his narrow heart, from his still more narrow mind, from his pride, which is narrower than either; it springs from selfishness and to selfishness returns. It goes not to the world, it calls the world to itself. For us, children of God born in eternity by a word of His spirit, charity presses always upon us; it leaves us only the repose of the sacrifice which has been our cradle.

Saint Paul, being upon the ruins of Troas, saw in a vision a man of Macedonia, who stood up and interceded with him; "*Pass over,*" said he, "*Pass over into Macedonia, and help us.*"<sup>1</sup> That Macedonia, gentlemen, is the whole of mankind, supplicating God, praying to Him for truth; and Saint Paul is all of us who believe like

<sup>1</sup> Acts of the Apostles, ch. 16, v. 9.

him—who, like him, have received the first-fruits of the spirit of life and of love. Now, as then, upon the ruins of Troas, that lively image of the desolation of the world, the Macedonian stands up before us, he entreats us standing, for he is in haste: “*Pass over,*” says he to us, “*Pass over to Macedonia, and help us.*” And if the fear of devotedness keeps us back, if the toils, the journeyings, the hunger, the thirst, the tortures affright us, God says to us as to Saint Paul, in another vision, in the vision at Corinth: “*Fear not, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I have much people in this city.*”<sup>1</sup> How could we be silent? How can the hand of man close our lips? God incites us continually; much people always wait for us. You have here, gentlemen, the spectacle and the proof of it; and yet this assembly, however vast and profound it may be, is not all my auditory; my auditory is mankind. My words, spoken to you, will fall back again upon mankind, like the stones thrown upon the surface of the seas, which, from bound to bound, and borne along by the waves, fly on to attain their place in the distance.

<sup>1</sup> Acts of the Apostles, ch. 18, v. 9, 10.

## TWENTY-FIFTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE CHARITY OF FRATERNITY PRODUCED IN THE  
SOUL BY CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

CATHOLIC doctrine is the only doctrine which has produced and which produces the charity of apostleship. This I proved in my last Conference. I add, that Catholic doctrine alone produces the charity of fraternity. Fraternity is the reciprocal sharing of the heart, of labor, and of possessions; and it seems, gentlemen, that that virtue should flow in us by a source as simple and as natural as our life. For, in fact, what are we? Are we not members of one and the same family; the children of one and the same father, and of one single home? In vain should we desire to destroy the pages of our genealogy; all, without exception, all of us come from the same place; and, whilst pride, without regarding the human race, makes up for itself illustrious and particular antiquities, the blood of Adam speaks in us louder than any titles, and prostrates us all at the feet of the same patriarch as at the feet of the same God. Yet, notwithstanding that evident community of origin, and that fraternity which nature has placed in us, what a scene does history present to us, if we consider it without reference to Catholic doctrine? Races, enemies to each other; families withdraw-



ing themselves as far as possible the one from the other by rank, power, and tradition; men, greedy of this world's possessions, and seizing upon the land, not as the real patrimony of all, but as the privileged patrimony of the strongest, the most skilful, and the most fortunate; on every side war, jealousy, envy, spoliation, the elevation of a few, and the misery of many.

However, gentlemen, it is not the same with regard to fraternity as to humility, chastity, and apostleship. The world who rejects these even after the revelation which has been made of them, does not equally reject the other; a great number appreciate it now, even without the pale of Catholic doctrine; and if there be a dream cherished by elevated souls, if there be an idea which agitates opinion, which inspires brilliant pages and consecrates great labors, it is assuredly the idea of fraternity. Whilst the world insults humility as a virtue which harasses it; rejects chastity as an intolerable burden; stigmatizes the apostleship as an invasion of truth, or of that which calls itself truth; fraternity finds there warm and generous friends, who even exaggerate its rights; who err as to the means of establishing it; but who proclaim it as the last object and end of all history, and of all the movements of mankind. The spectacle to which we invite you will be still more curious and instructive. It will be grand to see on the one hand, the world pursuing the same idea as ourselves, powerless to realize it, notwithstanding its efforts; and, on the other, Catholic doctrine daily attaining its fraternal objects by the simple effusion of its teaching, and of its ordinary efficacy.

In the year of Rome 680, under the consulship of Marcus Terentius Varro Lucullus, and of Caius Cassius Varus, at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, and facing the Sea of Naples, two or three hundred men were assembled. They bore strongly-marked traces of our common dignity; and

yet it was not necessary to look long upon them to discover also in their whole being the marks, too visible, of a painful degradation. In the midst of the general silence, one of them stood up and addressed this discourse to those who were assembled: "Dear and miserable companions in misfortune, have we determined to bear even to the end the injuries of the lot which has been made for us? Humanity exists not for us; outcasts from the world, grasped from our earliest days by the iron hand of destiny, we have up to this time only served to amuse our masters by barbarous spectacles, or by our labors to feed their ostentatious pomp, their effeminacy, or their voluptuousness. It is true we have fled—we are free—but you feel that that liberty is still only servitude; the whole empire, the whole earth is against us; we have no friends, no country, no home. But do we want other friends, another country, another home, than ourselves? Let us consider who we are, and first count our strength. Are we not the greater number? What are our masters? A handful of patricians, whose houses we people, who breathe only because we have not the courage to put our hands upon their breasts to stifle them. And if it be as I say, if we have the power of the greater number, if nearly the whole of mankind be enslaved to a horde enjoying all and abusing everything, what hinders us from at once standing up and stretching out our hand in the world, and from asking the gods to decide between us and our oppressors? We have not only numbers, we have intelligence also; many of us have taught their masters, or teach their children, human learning; we know what they know, and that which they know they derive from us; it is we who are their grammarians, their philosophers, and who have taught them that eloquence which they bear to the *forum*, in order to oppress the whole world. In fine, we have more than number and intelli-

gence, we have right also on our side, for who has made us slaves? Where is the title of our servitude and of their sovereignty? If it be war, let us make war in our turn; let us for once try destiny, and let us merit by our courage, that destiny may decide in our favor." Having thus spoken, Spartacus stretched out his hand towards heaven and towards the sea; his action completed his discourse; the crowd who had listened to him rose up, felt that they had a captain, and eight days after, forty thousand slaves ranged in battle array made the Roman generals turn their backs, stirred up Italy from one end to the other, and saw themselves, like Hannibal, on the point of seeing the smoke of Rome as victors.

They were vanquished, however, notwithstanding their numbers and their courage; and Pompey, coming to put the seal upon their defeat, had but to write a few lines to the Senate, to inform it that the vile slaves, in the moment of terror, had returned to their legitimate nothingness.

Such was the state of the world some years before the coming of Jesus Christ. A large portion of mankind had neither country, nor family, nor rights; they were inscribed in the law under the rubric of things, and not of men. They were treated as a more intelligent, stronger race of animals, but who had no other distinction than being more apt to a profitable servitude. I could, for my subject, limit myself to the fact, and say to you: See what man had made of man in four thousand years; see what fraternity was before Jesus Christ. But it will not be unprofitable, if after having seen the fact we seek to discover its cause, in order better to comprehend the grandeur and the difficulty of the revolution operated in the world in this regard by Catholic doctrine.

It is, then, gentlemen, since you desire to know the cause of servitude, it is because man does not love man;

because he does not love labor ; because he does not like to share his goods ; because, in fine, he likes nothing of that which constitutes fraternity.

Man does not love man ; for love, that indescribable charm which incites us towards an object, and which induces us less to give ourselves than to become absorbed in that object ; love, that most incomprehensible marvel of our nature, for which we spend all our lives, even to the point when we begin to despair of ever realizing the mystery of it ; love has but one unique cause, a cause rare and transient in mankind. I would hide its name ; I reproach myself to a certain degree for declaring it in this pulpit ; but it is impossible for me not to pronounce it. Love has but one cause, and that cause is beauty. Whenever man is in presence of a nature in which that terrible gift shines, if he be not sheltered by a divine shield, he will feel its power : however stubborn, however proud he may be, he will come like a child to bend at the feet of that something which he has seen, and which has subdued him by a look, by a hair of his neck—*in uno crine colli sui*, according to the admirable language of Scripture. But that beauty, the unique cause of love, is rare and transient in us. It is possessed but by a very small number, and the beings who are most largely endowed with it, enjoy their crown only but for a moment. Adored one day in their lives, they soon feel the fragility of the gift which has been imparted to them ; the adulators disappear as the years fly, and sometimes they do not wait for years. The heart violently enamored, disengages itself with rapidity ; and from experience to experience, those beings who have been so much cherished, at last find that they no longer possess anything, either for themselves or for others, but the relics of a dream.

Beauty, which is the source of love, is also the source of the greatest desolation here below, as if Providence



and Nature repented of having endowed some of us with so rich and so rare a gift.

If such is the cause of love, how is mankind to be loved? Besides the small number who possess it, and with so many imperfections, what remains? What does man see around himself? Men not only deprived of the grace and the majesty of their nature, but disfigured by toil, degraded by numberless evils, in whom the eye no longer perceives anything but a kind of machine which moves. And if we leave the body and penetrate even to the soul, misery and shame become disclosed there under still more profound appearances, which no longer keep back scorn by pity. Pride without cause, ambition, selfishness, hatred, sensuality—all the vices contend for that interior visage of man, and aspire to dishonor it. What is there left for love? To what vestige of beauty will man attach himself in order to love man and share with him like a brother the pains of toil and the joy of possessions?

Man does not love labor. He loves only the activity which flatters pride and cheats weariness. Pascal remarked this: "A man," said he, "considers himself unfortunate because a misfortune has thrown him into a magnificent chateau, where, surrounded by all kinds of enjoyments and distinctions, nothing is wanting to him but a crowd of solicitors and of importunators who hinder him from thinking of himself." This is true; we love activity, but a kind of activity which is easy and honored, which, according to the expression of Madame de Staël, adds an interest to repose, and, without fatiguing us, gives us the satisfaction of holding and affecting the threads of this world. It is the indolent activity of command which seduces us: but as soon as there is any real fatigue of mind or body, we strive to throw it upon others as much as we can. Labor is a penalty. It was imposed upon man when God drove him from the terrestrial paradise



with this sentence: "*In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread.*" In rejecting it we do but reject a punishment, and in order to accept it when love is wanting to us, nothing less than the full power of necessity must be exercised upon us. Now, man wants love with regard to man, and the dislike to labor, combined with its necessity, unceasingly inspires him with the idea and the temptation of imposing servitude on others. How far, then, is he from the fraternity which is the reciprocal sharing of the heart, of labor, and of possessions?

It would seem natural to believe that man, having attained to a certain amount of riches, and having more than enough, would feel no pain in giving that which is useless, even to the superabundance of luxury; but this is an error. Man never gives willingly. When he no longer knows what to do with his gold, he buys the land which produces it. Destitute often of posterity, or reduced to nephews whom he detests, he purchases still, and if there is not enough land within his reach to satisfy his eager desire for possessions, he buries in deep coffers that gold become doubly useless, affording himself sometimes the pleasure of gazing upon it, of counting it, and of ascertaining exactly by how much his happiness is increased! What joy is there in this? You and I are equally ignorant of it, we only account for passions of which we have ourselves been victims. The poor do not understand the state of the man who is rich and who loves better to heap up and hide than to give: but so it is. The time arrives even when the rich man wearies of being so, when he can do no more with his fortune, when he is a prey to an immense distaste for all that which surrounds him: he might, it would seem, lay open a new vein of pleasure by reclaiming a ruined family from misery, by marrying poor young people who love each other faithfully. He will not even want to seek misfortune; misfortune will ascend his

staircase of its own accord, it ascends on all occasions without being looked for; it knocks at the door of his chamber, it bears to the wretched being a blessing which he no longer recognizes. But satiety, when it has increased and reached the state of pain and misery, does not even then teach man the secret of stripping himself of his possessions. He considers that the honor of being richer than other men is worthy of being purchased by suffering. Once more, we understand nothing of this condition; but it is so, and it reveals to us a third source of the servitude substituted in the ancient world for fraternity.

In effect, if man does not love his fellow-man, if he hates labor, and abhors the sharing of his possessions, who does not perceive at the end of these tendencies of the soul, as an inevitable consequence, the establishment of servitude? Why should I not abuse my power against the man whom I despise, in order to subject him to toil from which I free myself, and which serves at one and the same time my fortune and my pride? Why should I not occupy as many men as I am able, at the lowest possible cost, for the satisfaction of all my senses? Why, if I am able, should I not have, as they have in India, men to drive away importunate animals from my face, others to bear my palanquin, others to keep a glass of water all ready for me when I may be thirsty, others to accompany me and do me honor? Perhaps I may not have the opportunity of subjecting my fellow-men to myself; but has the occasion ever been wanting in the world to oppressors? When the causes of servitude are set up in the heart of man, who will resist it? Where shall we find the fulcrum of the weak against the strong? Who will stand up and speak for man, if man despises him? By the very effect of a want of love, and of the greedy desire to become greater, disinherited generations must be produced: those generations

will bestir themselves, will alarm the more fortunate of the world : it will then be needful to create a power which may deprive them of the idea of rebelling, and which may afford to selfishness tranquil and untroubled sleep. What means are more natural than reducing men to a kind of servitude which degrades them in their own eyes, and does not even permit them to dream of taking their revenge ?

These are not, gentlemen, chimerical interpretations of the sentiments of man. God has permitted servitude to exist even to the present time, to reveal to you continually what you are without the charity which comes from him. You might have believed that you loved mankind of yourselves, and that philanthropy would suffice to establish universal fraternity. God has taken care to undeceive you. Let Europeans, Frenchmen, descend a few degrees of latitude, and be transported under a hotter sun, their philanthropy vanishes at the doors of a sugar manufactory. Become possessors of slaves, they discover the most powerful reasons in the world in favor of servitude ; even those which I spoke of but just now, the necessity of labor, the impossibility of performing it themselves, the duty of accumulating riches, the inferiority of the subjected race ; men will go far to seek that privileged race, and if they are not yet near enough to the brute, they will take care, by ill-treating them, and by depriving them of education, to bring them down to the desired level of vileness and brutishness, so that all may judge them to be incapable and unworthy of liberty. Behold man, gentlemen, and what obstacles Catholic doctrine must have found in him to the establishment of fraternity. Let us see what it has done in order to be the stronger.

When Jesus Christ determined to found the apostleship, He pronounced these words : "*Go and teach all nations.*" He did more to found fraternity. He returned to it on several occasions, and laid down three celebrated texts.

"*I give you,*" said He, on one occasion "*a new commandment : That you love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.*"<sup>1</sup> In the first place, gentlemen, remark that expressson : *I give you a new commandment.* Jesus Christ made use of it only on that occasion, at least in so distinct a manner. Humility, chastity, the apostleship, although new things, were, however, less new than this precept : *Love one another.* And Jesus Christ adds that it is the sign by which his disciples would be recognized ; not that humility, chastity, and apostleship are not very evident and very sure signs of the Christian profession, but because charity is the ocean in which all the other virtues begin and end. It is charity which makes the humble, the chaste, the apostle ; it is charity which is the principle and the end, and, consequently, the capital sign of the transformation of the soul.

Remark again, gentlemen : Catholic doctrine appearing in the world does not say like Spartacus : "Arouse, arm yourselves, lay claim to your rights ;" it says, with calm and simplicity : *Love one another.* If there be any one among you who complains that he is not loved, let him love the first : love produces love. When two shall love each other, and the joy of their hearts shall be seen, a third will come who will desire to be loved also in giving his love ; and then a fourth. That which is wanting to you is not a right, it is a virtue. Now no law can give you a virtue, no victory can create it for you. If Spartacus had vanquished, the world would have become on the morrow what it was the day before : the slaves would have become masters, the masters slaves ; and yet all those victors, intoxicated with the spoils of Rome, would have slain each other in the name of fraternity. A virtue is not born upon battle-fields ; the soul is the only

<sup>1</sup> St. John, ch. 13, v. 34, 35.



ground in which God sows its seed and from which He gathers the harvest. What do you when a necessary or a desirable plant is wanting to your industry? You seek it from far, under the sun which ripens it; you plant it, and you cultivate it with additional care, as the soil in which you have placed it is not its natal soil. Ah! gentlemen, the cultivation of virtue does not differ from this; it differs only in this, that it is not necessary to go so far; the kingdom of God is within you; the land is your soul, and you have just received the seed; it is contained in these words: *Love one another*.

It is also in that second saying: "*Whosoever will be greater among you, let him be the least; and he who would be first among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*"<sup>1</sup> You complain of being slaves, you know not what you say. A man is a slave when he serves against his will; serve by your own inclination, and slavery would be destroyed. You have been told that the greatest misfortune and the greatest humiliation is servitude; and I say to you, make an act of love of servitude; that which was ignominy will become a glory, that which was slavery will become devotedness; that which was last will become first; and that which was the depth of misery will become an excess of joy. Do you not know that there is nothing more sweet than to love? And when men love, they give themselves; when they give themselves, they serve; and when they serve from love they are happy. Serve, then, with love—what will be wanting to you? It is true that the order has been inverted, because it is love which precedes service, here service has preceded love; but what is that to you? Re-establish order by loving; wherever service and love go together, the mystery of heavenly blessedness is accom-

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 20, v. 26, 27, 28.



plished. You then, O you, my brethren, who are slaves, form a holy republic of love; love each other, and love your masters with the common love which you bear to yourselves; you will end by disarming them, by persuading them to love you also, and to love each other themselves. Nothing is so contagious as virtue having attained to the state of love. Your masters regarded you as enemies—they felt even more fear of than hatred towards you; when they see that you love them, and that you serve them freely, their eyes will become open—your liberty will spring up of itself, as a fruit rises from its own tree, and falls of itself when it is ripe.

There remains a third precept necessary also to the work of fraternity: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*" You complain of the insensibility of the rich; do otherwise; love poverty, and give of the little which you have to those who have still less. Do not say that you cannot deprive yourselves of your share, if others do not the same; give yours first—the others will give theirs also. Yours will be rendered back to you a hundred-fold, and the spirit of poverty, without laws, without violence, without dissolving society in a division which will be always to do again, and always without effect, will destroy the enmity between the poor and the rich, will make of this one a steward, and of the other a *protégé* of Providence.

Without doubt, gentlemen, all this doctrine is as simple as it is profound; no one had discovered it, however. It is the same with this doctrine as with the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus; it appeared chimerical before he succeeded, and then the whole world was surprised at not having conceived the idea: it needed only to equip a vessel and sail straight on. Nevertheless, we have here an additional marvel; doctrine conceived and promulgated is but as yet a small thing; it must at-

tain to a point of efficacy of itself, without the help of any victory or of any legislation. It must be accepted freely, practised freely, and that in opposition to all the instincts of mankind. Man was told to love his fellow-man, he who did not love him; he was told to serve him, he who only liked to be served; he was told to give his possessions, he who had a horror of giving what he possessed. Evidently the end and the means bear no proportion to each other. And, notwithstanding, what has not been its success? I turn over a few pages of the New Testament, and I read: "*And the multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did any one of them say, that of the things which he possessed anything was his own; but all things were common to them. As many as had lands and houses sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the apostles, and distribution was made to every man according as he had need.*"<sup>1</sup> The Christian republic was formed; a republic new, unknown, in which all had but one name—that of brother.

But this republic should not be limited to a corner of the world, and to existing there as a favored and happy sect, exhibiting to men, from far, the example of fraternity. The earth has been placed before it as the only limit of its realization; it has been called to excite and to establish everywhere the reciprocal sharing of the heart, of labor, and of possessions. For that great work it had need of a priesthood, founded upon the principle of fraternity; this priesthood it created. It destined to the functions of government and of instruction not princes and learned men, but those among the brethren, whatever may be their birth, in whom charity shone with a greater lustre; it chose the child of the shepherd and the son of the slave; it placed upon their head the crown of

<sup>1</sup> Acts of the Apostles, ch. 4, v. 32, 33.

the priest, the mitre of the bishop, the tiara of the pontiff, and said boldly to the princes of this world: See to the feet of whom you must come to seek light and to receive benediction. You, Cæsars, you will some day strip off your pride; you will humble yourselves before the son of your servant who formerly occupied some obscure place in the cellars of your palace; it is to him that you will confess your faults; it is he who will stretch out his hand over you, and who will say to you: In the name of God, Cæsar, thy sins are forgiven thee; go and do no more that which thou hast done. The result was easy to foresee. As soon as the poor and the humble were elevated, even by the merit of humility, to the throne of teaching and to the tribunal of conscience, human nature became invested with a dignity drawn from its very core, and from a virtue possible to all; it was no longer birth and war, chance and skill, divers sources of exclusion and of oppression; it was no longer selfishness, but charity, which held the sceptre of the destinies of humanity. Slavery lost all signification, and that without struggles between masters and slaves—without any precipitate and bloody revolution, by the course of things alone. As the irons of a prisoner wear out with time, and by rubbing against each other, and the jailer has no longer need to unloose them when the lawful hour of liberty has arrived, so religion had no need to shake the chains of the slave in order to make them fall, they had become worn by time, and by the friction of doctrine.

But to destroy slavery was not all the work of fraternity: it was still necessary to provide for the service of human miseries. Catholic doctrine created for them a gratuitous service; that is to say, a service of devotedness, without any other recompense than the strictly necessary wants of the devoted individual. This service naturally occasioned absolute chastity; it substituted the whole human

race in the place of family. I will not give its history, gentlemen ; who does not know it ? Who does not know with what ingenious fecundity Catholic doctrine has provided fathers and mothers for all kinds of misfortune ? Discovering in each age its chief misery, it has raised up for it on every occasion new servants. It has produced the Sister of Charity with as much ease as it made the Knight of Malta, the Brother of the Christian Schools, as well as the Brother of Mercy, the friend of the lunatic as well as the friend of the leper. You have still daily under your own eyes examples of these creations, where the power of charity struggles hand to hand with the power of misery, and does not permit it to touch the most obscure point of humanity without immediately following it. Thus the reign of fraternity has become established among men ; a work surpassing belief even to those who see it, and one which I must ask you to explain to me.

I ask you what is the cause of so strange a phenomenon, after so many others which we have already seen ? Why and how is it that Catholic doctrine has alone been efficacious for the abolition of servitude, for transforming the heart of the rich and the heart of the poor, for organizing that voluntary and gratuitous service which still covers Europe, notwithstanding the conspirations of so many men who strive to destroy it altogether ? I ask you how this is accomplished ? how it is that that Catholic doctrine, which already alone produces humility, chastity, apostleship, should be also the only doctrine able to produce fraternity, alone and always alone ? The others do but destroy, or if they preserve something of the vigor which they have primitively received from Catholic doctrine, they do but adulterate its work and its gifts.

I have already answered, gentlemen, that this efficacy of Catholic doctrine is divine, since if it were human, every other doctrine would, sooner or later, discover the secret



of it. Why is it that man now loves his fellow-man, if Catholic doctrine has left man as it found him, with his nature alone, and its only attraction ! Beauty, said we, is the unique cause of love ; Catholic doctrine, then, must have invested man with a beauty which he had not before. But what beauty ? If I look upon you, I see no change ; your face is the one I knew formerly, and you have even lost something in the correctness of the lines of your physiognomy. What new beauty have you then received ? Ah ! a beauty which leaves you man, and which is, nevertheless, divine ! Jesus Christ has put upon you His own image ; He has touched your soul with His own ; He has made of you and of Himself one single moral being. It is no longer you ; it is He who lives in you. A saint said : “ If we could see the beauty of a soul, we should no longer be able to look at anything ! ” That beauty which the world sees not, we Christians perceive ; it pierces through dishonored humanity ; we feel it, we seek it, it attracts us, not for a day, like human beauty, but with the indelible charm of eternity. If I love you, if I be forced to speak to you, if I would give my life for the salvation of but one of you, it is not that I am more than a man ; but I see in you an inexpressible light which envelops you, which penetrates you, and enraptures me from within you. You feel the same also towards me, if you are Christians. One day, and perhaps soon, that speech which announces doctrine to you will grow dull ; decline draws near to man with rapidity, and brings with itself solitude and oblivion. When that time comes, there will remain to me in your souls only the recollection of an echo ; but to me, as to you, in life and in death, the beauty which comes from Christ will remain, His visage which is upon us, and the love which springs from it, to gladden us while living, and to embalm us in the tomb.

You have already some experience of life, you have



knocked at more than one door; tell me, then, have you not felt the difference between the man who welcomes you as man, and he who welcomes you as Christian? With the exception of your mothers, your sisters, and a small number of friends, what indifferent man, however philanthropic he may be, has pressed you to his heart? In what cabinet, in the retirement of which a philosopher hides his glorious watchings, have you been received with love? In whom have you recognized the bosom of fraternity? For my part, with the exceptions which I have just named, I have found it only in Christians, in souls animated with the virtue of Christ, in the priests to whom I confessed my faults, in some young men who bore to me the avowal of theirs, and who threw themselves with joy into my arms, fraternal souls, already fired with the communion of saints, revealing to me at a distance the eternal ecstasy of unity.

And you, men who are but men, permit me to ask you: how do you stand with regard to human fraternity and love? Alas! after rapid illusions, you already no longer believe in love; you are become incredulous even as to beauty, and the source of mysterious joys is already dried up in the depths of your heart. You have taken away from man the God who dwells there, and you have been amazed at the desolation which has followed. What need have I again to cite at my tribunal Mahometanism, Protestantism, and Rationalism? The world may be considered in the mass as well as by analysis. Well, then! since human reason, under divers colors, has combated and weakened Catholic doctrine in the world, what progress has fraternity made there? Its name is in every mouth, it forms the foundation of systems and of desires; we hear of nothing but of the spirit of association and community. Men everywhere extend their hands to each other; and yet a suppressed lamentation, an unanimous

complaining, proclaims to the whole earth the coldness of hearts. If I hearken to the man who bears the burden of military service, the magistrate applied to the functions of justice, the professor unravelling in the heart of the young man the secret of his inclinations, the politician studying closely the great mainsprings of the world ; if I hearken, in fine, to the voice of society, by all the pores through which it escapes, but one word falls upon my ear : egotism. Coldness and emptiness are becoming formed among mankind. A melancholy air is felt even in the ardor of politicians, a faint and fatigued breathing which outwardly announces the misery which is within. So, when the sun declines towards the horizon, the sap of nature stops and becomes congealed ; it would look for death, if it did not hope always for the resurrection.

The resurrection will come, Christians, and will come by us. Since the world, who will have neither humility, nor chastity, nor apostleship, desires fraternity : since it is obliged to desire it, and since it daily endeavors to produce fraternity, this is the common ground where we shall meet together. Let us profit by it. Between the world and us, it is who shall diffuse more true love, who shall give most and receive least. No one in this conflict can criminate us. Let us throw ourselves into it with a full heart. We have received so much love, that it will cost us but little to give some back. Let us gain our brethren by the blessings we shall heap upon them ; and since from moment to moment coldness increases in the world, let warmth each moment increase in us, that we may be able to make it reach even to them ; so that Lazarus being in the tomb, if it be necessary for him to descend even there, we may have life enough for him and for ourselves, tears enough to weep for him, power enough to utter the great cry : Lazarus, although dead, hear the voice which recalls to life, and come forth !

## TWENTY-SIXTH CONFERENCE.

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OF RELIGION AS THE PASSION AND VIRTUE OF  
MANKIND.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

HUMILITY, chastity, charity, are cardinal virtues introduced into the world by Catholic doctrine. I call them cardinal virtues not only on account of their own importance, but because they bear along in their train other virtues ; such, for example, as obedience, penitence, poverty ; also new virtues, which, together, transform the heart of the Christian, and, reaching even to purely moral virtues, impart to them in his own soul a better and a stronger expression. But these three virtues, mothers and mistresses, do not, however, occupy the highest place ; they flow from another, which is their principle, and of which it is necessary for me now to speak to you, lest I should hide from you the active cause of all the effects produced in the soul by Catholic doctrine. That active cause, that primordial virtue, is religion.

Religion is the positive and efficacious intercourse of man with God. With the distinction of humility, of chastity, and charity, which are but virtues, religion is at the same time a passion and a virtue—the most exalted passion and the most exalted virtue of mankind ; a passion which Catholic doctrine alone satisfies ; a virtue which

Catholic doctrine alone produces. That declaration, gentlemen, in revealing to you the profound and vast subject which remains this year for us to treat of, may possibly astonish you, for it appears to me to be a contradiction in terms. Whoever says passion, says weakness; whoever says virtue, says strength; to maintain that religion is the highest passion of mankind, and that it is its highest virtue, is it not to maintain two things which exclude each other by a manifest contradiction? And yet it is so. Not only is it so, but it is the knot of all the history of religion in the world. Whoever may consider religion only as a passion, or only as a virtue, will never unravel the thread of the destinies of humanity.

I shall establish, then, in the very first place, that duality of the nature of religion, namely, that religion is a passion and a virtue. Afterwards I shall show that it is a virtue reserved to Catholic doctrine; and I shall draw the conclusions, of which I proceed to lay down the first premises.

Man is born between three seats of life—nature, humanity, God. His birth is but the act by which he is plunged into that triple atmosphere in which he breathes—the atmosphere of nature, the atmosphere of humanity, the atmosphere of God. He is plunged into it by his birth; he is baptized in it by his development, and that in all times and in all places, whether he may have fallen under the reign of the most pure revelation, or under the darkness of the most corrupted superstition. As soon as he is born and develops himself, he is in necessary communication with that triple focus, by his intelligence, by his heart, and by his senses. He is in communication with nature by his intelligence, in drawing from her the knowledge of the facts and of the laws which constitute physical sciences; by his heart, in being subject to the attractions which she contains; by his senses, in aspiring after her

emanations, and identifying himself with them. He is, under all the same aspects but in a higher manner, in communication with humanity; for humanity imparts to him moral and social knowledge, inspires him with a love of devotedness for beings like himself, and, by a labor as permanent as universal, nourishes, strengthens, and adorns his body.

It is the same with regard to God. He takes possession of man by a certainty and an action from which he can no more escape than from humanity and nature. Certainty with regard to God, humanity, and nature, are for man three contemporary and equal facts. He has no more need to demonstrate to himself the existence of God than he has to demonstrate to himself the existence of nature and of humanity, and all reasoning which throws doubt upon God has the same sceptical value against nature and humanity. Only, God is more or less perfectly known, as nature and humanity are more or less perfectly known. It is not with regard to certainty that the distinction arises, but with regard to knowledge; and whenever God reveals Himself more clearly than at other times, it is not a higher degree of certainty which He conveys, but a wider manifestation of His nature, of His works, and of Himself. If we did not possess this primitive certainty with regard to God, to nature, and to humanity, inseparably bound up together, we should never attain to it, because all reality would fall away at once from under us. Reasoning may very well be able to defend and confirm that triple and single certainty; it does not create it. In all cases, whatever may be the unwillingness of man, he is in necessary relation with the idea of God; let him do what he likes, the idea of God appears to him in spite of himself. It is in the world; its spectre rises up before him—it has eyes, hands, a mouth; we may say, No, to it; we may say, Depart; but in saying No, we admit the power of its lan-



guage ; in saying Depart, we admit its presence. The negation affirms, and the repulsion attests. Men only take the trouble of denying a thing which lives ; we repulse only those who persist in forcing their way into our presence, and who trouble our repose by their importunities. We can only drive out that which has come in. And if God be denied, it is because He lives in the world, if He be repulsed, it is because He is present ; if He be driven out, it is because He has come in. And that existence, that presence, that entry of God into humanity, proves that He is ; for if He were not, from whence would the possession of that idea of Him by mankind have come ? I say possession, for it is not the same with regard to this idea as with so many others which appear but to vanish—which one man introduces into the world and another banishes therefrom—ephemeral ideas, which have their cradle in a book, and their tomb in a library. The idea of God has neither beginning nor end ; when it is driven out by the east, it comes back again by the west, or rather it never ceases to occupy at one and the same time all the points of time and space ; it is as powerful by negation as by affirmation, living by its enemies as well as by its worshippers ; being even more active, more obeyed, and more triumphant when it is combated than in the days when, as the peaceful mistress of all, the sister and neighbor of all, it enjoys an empire which is uncontested.

The ideal relation is not the only one which man necessarily has with God ; we reach Him by the heart as by the intelligence ; we love Him, we hate Him. For God has also this privilege, that men are never lukewarm with regard to Him ; He excites hatred where He does not excite love. You are sometimes astonished, Christians, at being hated ; you have, then, never thought of the value in the eyes of God of the testimony of hate. For what can be the reason for hating God ? What is there hate-

ful in the idea of God? What is there to excite hatred in the idea of a few men meeting together to pray to God? What is there to excite hatred in a temple which has been built upon that idea? What is there to excite hatred in all that which names, demonstrates, and honors God? Nothing, assuredly, if it be not the fear, and, consequently, the certainty which is felt with regard to God, if it be not the importunity of that power which leaves us no shelter against itself, and pursues us even into our consciences by a reproach of which we are the accomplices.

I add, that we are in relation with God even by our senses. When we suffer, from whom do we demand help? What soothes the sufferings of the poor? What wipes the sweat from their brow? What sustains and consoles mankind in its infinite miseries? It is the idea of God. The poor man at the corner of the street, in countries where he is not driven therefrom, asks, in the name of God, for the bread of which he has need. He knows that the God who nourishes his intelligence and his heart, is also the God who ripens the harvests, and who provides for the birds of heaven. The utterance of His name has an efficacy for obtaining what he asks for, and a still more mysterious efficacy for inwardly disarming want of a part of its poignancy. God is visibly, under every point of view, the great power and the great riches of mankind: and this is why it is the ardent desire of mankind to establish a perfect and efficacious relation with Him—a relation which constitutes religion.

But you will ask me, gentlemen, what I understand by a positive and efficacious relation with God, and in effect it is necessary for me, before proceeding further, to define these expressions.

A relation with a seat of life is positive when we actually derive life from it. Thus, our relations with nature and humanity are positive, because we really draw from

them the life of the intelligence, of the heart, and of the body. A relation with a seat of life is efficacious when our personal life, supported from that source, elevates itself to the level of that from which we derive it. Thus, in order that our relations with nature may be efficacious, our life must become naturalized—that is to say, must become elevated to the height of the powers and of the laws which constitute nature; and, in the same manner, in order that our relations with man may be efficacious, our life must become humanized—must escape from the selfishness of solitude, and only form in future a single unity with the life of our fellow-creatures. In applying that definition to the intercourse of man with God, that intercourse will be positive if man really draws from God the life of his intelligence, of his heart, and of his senses; it will be efficacious if the actual life of man becomes elevated by that intercourse to the point of deification; and, consequently, religion is no other thing than a communion of life with God.

The definition being thus made, I affirm that mankind possesses the passion of religion—the passion of a positive and efficacious intercourse with God. I know that many will deny this to me; many will think that they show great intelligence by saying that they have no need of God. It is a kind of phraseology which is well known. But I remark, in the first place, that it is a modern phraseology. Antiquity presents no similar language to us; that phrase is of an epoch in which God is become more manifest and more powerful than ever; and antiquity, which possessed the certainty of God without a clear and exact knowledge of Him, antiquity did not pronounce that phrase. It had not seen enough of God to despise Him; it had not enjoyed enough of Him to have become weary of Him. It sought Him as a yet distant object; and when men seek that which they feel the want of, they do not

curse it—they do not despise it. But the day came when God gave Himself—when He overflowed like water—when He said to mankind: “Come near and touch Me; put thy hand into My side, and thy finger into My wounds; behold Me humble, in order that thou mayest touch Me; hidden, that thou mayest see Me.” When God had said this—when He became proportioned to humanity, and had flowed in full stream upon all mankind, then some men, scattered here and there, esteemed themselves greater than He. But what is the language of a man, and of a man tired of God? A caprice, still more often a sleep of the soul, bordering upon idiotism. A man is born in a certain condition; attached to that glebe from infancy, he has the misfortune of not receiving the revelation of a higher life; he attains to the state of manhood, always absorbed in a monotonous and lowly ambition, without perceiving that something is wanting to him, and without society speaking to him, on his course, of God, in language loud enough to move him. It is a misfortune, we must pity him, but we can draw no conclusion from this which falls back upon mankind.

Humanity possesses the passion of uniting itself to God by a positive and efficacious relation; for a passion is no other thing than a want strongly felt—than an invincible attraction which incites us towards an object, in order to make the life of that object our own, and our life its life. Now, such is the tendency of humanity towards God—a tendency so visible that it fills all history, and that religion, in all times and in all places, conducts the principal and most majestic activity of nations. What do they not perform for God? They build temples that He may come and dwell in them—they ordain priests to represent Him—they gather together to honor Him by sacrifices—they address public and solemn prayers to Him—they place themselves under His protection by decrees—they connect

Him with all events, whether they be fortunate or unfortunate. What strange and continual fraternity between man and God ; not only man in his private and isolated condition, but man having attained to the name and the power of a nation ! Mark well, gentlemen, the steps of humanity in the world—migration of races—foundation of empires—dynasties forming—war and peace—social revolutions—downfalls and restorations—whatever may arrive, God is ostensibly there. He moves, He becomes still, He ascends and descends again with humanity ; He is the inseparable companion of its destinies, soldier and guest, victor and vanquished, always sought for, always hoped for, always present. What more could we do for Him ? What adorations and what blood have we refused to Him ? Even now, after a century of efforts made to drive away that guest of sixty centuries, what are we doing ? We are restoring His altars which were beaten down ; our greatest men pray to Him for their successes, and our greatest writers consecrate to Him their genius. Thirty years ago, when the princes of the world divided Europe among themselves, they took no account of God in their treaties of peace ; they believed Him banished for ever from the exalted transaction of sovereignty ; and see, from one end of Europe to the other, the rumor of religious questions warns them that mankind is not changed, and that God is always its first, its highest, and its most vast passion.

If you would leave this general consideration, and regard man yet nearer in his relations with God, I am ready to do so. I shall ask you which are the three races which best represent mankind, the one with regard to intelligence, the other with regard to the heart, the third with regard to the senses ? Which are they ? Evidently for intelligence, it is the philosopher ; for the heart, it is woman ; and for the senses, it is the people.



What does the philosopher occupy himself about? It is not about sciences, arts, and politics, all secondary and inconsiderable things for him; the philosopher has an unique and constant object of his thoughts, to which he refers all, and it is the infinite; that is to say, God under an abstract and general name. He seeks assiduously His nature and laws, and even when he wrests the infinite to draw from it something which is not God, it is still only a disguise under which he conceals Him without being able to hinder his intellectual life from being in permanent relation with that invisible and supreme world which the whole earth calls God. This relation is perhaps false; the philosopher does not desire from God what the world desires, and he goes astray in separating himself from tradition, in order to rely upon his own mind; he clothes God in a vestment of his own fancy; but it is God always who forms the foundation of all his speculations. Let him mould and form the infinite as he likes, his passion no less incites him to rise above visible nature, and to seek the vital aliment of his genius in the mysterious distance, which has no reality but by the name and the idea of God. When Phidias chiselled his Olympian Jupiter, it was doubtless a powerless and lying idol which left his hands, notwithstanding the idea of God pierced the marble, and infused a majesty into it which excited the adoration of the universe. Thus, the philosopher, even when he substitutes an idol of his own creation for the true God, also renders testimony to the movement which bears the intelligence towards the regions where the Divinity resides.

As to the race which represents the heart of humanity, its natural tendency towards religion is undisputed. That observation is even made use of to induce man to withdraw from God; it is said to him with false respect: All that is very good for women. Yes, it is good for

women ; I accept the expression, and rejoice in it. For woman, being the heart of man in its highest degree of delicacy and sensibility, her testimony is even that of man, inasmuch as he is capable of love and of devotedness. And if it were necessary to choose between the testimony of the philosopher and that of woman, however great may be the revelation of genius, I should place the revelation of the heart still higher ; and if it were necessary to raise up altars to anything human, I should prefer to adore the dust of the heart rather than the dust of genius. Let us never forget, gentlemen, that the religious woman has received the gift of believing and of loving ; and in applying to God her faith and her love, she proves that your own heart, which is born of her, which forms a part of hers, is also naturally religious.

The people also, that great representative of humanity in regard to the senses, in their turn affirm the same thing. The people are religious ; not as their masters would wish them to be in accepting religion like a bit which men put into the mouth of an untamed steed—the people would blush for shame at that ! They accept religion as a want—as an honorable passion of their nature ; and although an effort may be made to dishonor their faith by calling it the faith of the ignorant, they protect it by their poverty, their toil, and their majesty. They exclaim : We are poor, we are lowly, but we are not disinherited from that which is grand, we are not disinherited from that which is sublime. Longinus . . . they do not know the name of Longinus, but I speak for them, and I know Longinus—Longinus has said : “ The sublime is the expression of a great soul ; ” and the people, gentlemen, have not renounced the rendering of that expression, they have not renounced the joy of the sublime, and as they cannot experience this by the world, as the world refuses to their intelligence and to their hearts the opportunities

of this enjoyment, they dilate so much the more, in order to proclaim the God who elevates them, who blesses them, who says to them: "I am thy brother and thy equal, be not afraid."

So then, the philosopher, woman, the people—the intelligence at its highest degree, the heart at its highest degree, the senses at their highest degree—all three seek after God, desire God, ardently long for God. And why? Because your soul is greater than nature; because it is greater than humanity; because it exhausts in a few moments of life all that in the world which is not God; and as a soul has an aversion to a void—when it is produced there, when on some occasion the mind of the learned man becomes weary of collecting specimens for forming systems, when woman grows weary of infidelities, when the people see their arms wasting away in toil which perishes every evening, when all the nothingness of the world is for us at the palpable state—when, in fine, the soul is no longer but an ocean without water, its natural guest enters, and it is God. Our greatness creates this void within this, and the void causes us to hunger after God, in the same manner as, by the movement of life, our bowels having reached the same feeling which we call emptiness, stand in need of a positive and efficacious intercourse with nature, which restores and strengthens their inanition. The phenomenon is the same, only in a higher region; and definitively, in the same manner as we communicate with nature and humanity by hunger and by thirst, so we communicate with God by a sacred hunger and thirst, not as Virgil has said: *Auri sacra fames*, but *Dei sacra fames*.

Nevertheless, gentlemen, on another hand, religion, which is a passion of humanity, is also a virtue of humanity; I must explain to you how.

Virtue, we have already said, is a power of the soul

which accomplishes good. Now, if in order to desire God there be no need of strength ; if to feel the void within us, and invoke there something more powerful than nature and humanity, we have but to yield ; if God, who is the richest of all beings, causes us easily to feel a passion ; yet, in another point of view, inasmuch as our intercourse with God should be efficacious, inasmuch as it is necessary for us to deify our lives in order to be actually in communion with God, there, gentlemen, our infirmity appears, and betrays us. As long as we only extend the hand towards God, all goes well ; but God is heavy to bear. Call to mind the history of Saint Christopher. Saint Christopher had devoted his life to carrying travellers across a torrent. In a stormy night, he heard a knock at his door ; he opened it, and saw a child naked and shivering with cold, who asked to be carried over. The giant pressed him to pass the night in his habitation, represented to him the winds, the tempest, the darkness ; the child insisted, he was determined to cross over. Christopher, faithful to his vow, took the child upon his shoulder, and ventured across the current and the rocks ; but as he advanced, his burden appeared to increase ; it became insupportable ; the giant halted, and said to the child : " Dost thou know that thou art become as heavy as a world ? " " Be not amazed," answered the child, " for thou bearest Him who made the world."

So, gentlemen, is it with regard to God, when it becomes a question of uniting our life with His, no longer by a want and a desire only, but by an efficacious reality, by a transformation of our being into the splendor of His. It is easy for Prometheus to aspire to heaven, and put his hand upon the sacred fire ; but, take care, Prometheus, fire burns when it is touched. God is infinite light and holiness ; and it is not a small thing to draw near to Him with a feeble intelligence, a corrupted heart, a body stig-



matized by the passions. It is not a small thing to receive God in your intelligence, in your heart, and in your senses, and to mingle two natures so disproportionate in one real communion. That work calls for an energetic strength, a virtue quite sublime, which knows how to bend the spirit of man to the spirit of God, without taking from the spirit of man its personality and its liberty; which transports the heart even to the love of the invisible, and retains it there in a joy without substance, and without body; which subdues the senses, chastises and immolates them, so that their weight might not hinder the ascent of the soul towards the inaccessible heights of the Divinity. What a prodigy! And that prodigy must be accomplished although we are plunged in nature and in humanity, although we are bound and defiled by contact with them, we must still advance. God in our right hand, and the world in our left; continually sacrificing the world, and carrying it always. Certainly, this is difficult, it is to require of man something more than human; and, notwithstanding, this is the price of efficacious intercourse with God. Without this painful transformation, religion is but the act of a mendicant who asks for alms, and who lets it fall because his hand is too timorous to sustain its weight.

I hear, every day, men who say: If religion is so manifest and so well established, why am I not religious? Why do I not see the truth of religion? Harken to the answer: You are not religious for the same reason that you are not chaste; you are not chaste because chastity is a virtue, and you are not religious because religion is a virtue. Do you imagine that religion is a science which is to be learned and made use of like mathematics? Ah! gentlemen, if religion were but a science, it would suffice to have in your chamber a blackboard and a little chalk to sketch a few algebraical equations in order to be



religious. Religion, it is true, is an equation to be solved, but an equation between man and God, between poverty and riches, between darkness and light, between holiness and corruption, between the finite and the infinite, between nothingness and the absolute being. And that terrible equation is not solved by the intelligence, it is solved only with virtue, not even with the virtue which the sages and the heroes of the world produce, but with the virtue of God, accepted by us, the fruit of our heart and of His own, an incomprehensible wedlock which is before your eyes, which speaks to you, and which you do not understand, in its inexpressible wooing of you, because you are held back by a triple feebleness which intoxicates you with yourselves—feebleness of mind, feebleness of heart, feebleness of the senses.

Feebleness of mind, what is it? A man is struck by the first phenomenon which appears against God; he sees, for instance, many forms of worship in the world, and he exclaims: If there were a true religion upon the earth, there would evidently be only one. That thought suffices for him; he has raised up a barrier against God, and he will never remove it. The unhappy creature does not know that the very multitude of the forms of worship shows even to satiety the religious nature and end of man, and that man could not be born religious if that act of birth were not the authentic act of the divinity even of religion. He does not understand that man, at the same time free and religious, driven towards God by a want which is a passion, withdrawn from Him by a kind of dread of His perfection, divided between these two contrary sentiments and seeking to unite them, creates for himself ideas of God and forms of worship within his scope; adores and attacks Him at one and the same time; says to Him: Remain and depart. The false forms of worship, gentlemen, are but a transaction between the two move-

ments of man with regard to God ; and perhaps nothing proves more the indispensable truth of religion than this spectacle of mankind professing to dishonor God rather than to exist without intercourse with Him. Well, a reasonable man, a *savant*, a profound politician will pass his life—that life pregnant with an eternity : he will pass it without religion, under the shelter of the miserable idea which I have just made known to you, and which I am really forced to call idiotism—more than idiotism—since it proves just that which it designs to deny—the necessity and the truth of religion. He will some day fall from this state, with this single support, into divine light, in which that which will cause the most astonishment to him will be the fact of his having perished by a demonstration which should have saved him.

Feebleness of heart—another cause which arrests man and hinders him from entering into positive and efficacious intercourse with God. He is in one of these two conditions ; he still loves, or he loves no longer. When he loves, he is seduced by that light flame which rises from his heart, as in cemeteries a light is seen which shines for a moment upon the tomb of the dead. He believes in that fragile love, and sacrifices to it eternal love, without suspecting that God communicates to our affections—when they are regulated and imbued with his love—a charm which purifies them and makes them lasting. Or he no longer loves, and the disenchantment of the creature, instead of turning him towards God, extends even to himself the causes which have dried up his heart. He no longer understands the language which he has spoken ; when he is told that God hath loved us even to suffering for us, it appears to him to be a childish dream : this news of love, come from far, finds him without remembrance and leaves him without hope ; persuasion has no influence upon the dead.

There remains in the feebleness of the senses a third and more powerful cause of our religious incapacity. I shall say but a word on this head, so easy will it be for you to supply what I shall not say. Who would believe that man withdraws himself from God in order to spare his senses, I do not say great sacrifices, but slight privations? Who would believe that fasting and abstinence are reasons against God? It is so, however, gentlemen; and that simple observation should teach you what strength is necessary in man in order to enter into communion with God, since such things form already a difficulty for him. As much, then, as it is true that humanity tends towards God by a real and profound want, by a passion which fills the world with its efforts; so is it also true that that passion reaches to a state of efficacy only by virtue.

Religion is at the same time passion and virtue, the strongest passion of mankind and its highest virtue, equally remarkable, although diversely, whether it subjugates the soul without transforming it, or whether it transforms and deifies it in effect. And thereby you are shown why it is so much loved and so much hated, so often perverted and never destroyed. If it were only a virtue, it would easily perish with virtue; if it were only a passion, it would yield in its incapability of doing good. It is saved and supports itself by these two powers, God having willed that mankind could not in any time or place break off entirely from him. How vain, then, and worthy of pity are those who make themselves the enemies of religion! Madmen! They think they have but to combat a virtue, they find a passion; they think they have but to combat a passion, they find a virtue; they think at least to separate them, and the two heads of the divine hydra rise up together to reveal to them that God and humanity are for ever united.

## TWENTY-SEVENTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE POWERLESSNESS OF OTHER DOCTRINES TO PRODUCE  
RELIGION.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

RELIGION, we have said, is the positive and efficacious intercourse of man with God, and it is at the same time a passion and a virtue of humanity: a passion, inasmuch as humanity is drawn towards God by a constant and universal attraction; a virtue, inasmuch as, notwithstanding that attraction, it costs humanity great efforts to enter into that positive and efficacious intercourse with God. I add to-day that Catholic doctrine alone produces that positive and efficacious intercourse with God which we call by the name of religion; every other doctrine necessarily ends in one of these two catastrophes—the catastrophe of superstition, or the catastrophe of incredulity. Superstition is an intercourse, between man and God, tainted with inefficacy, immorality, and unreasonableness; incredulity is a hopeless rupture of all intercourse between man and God. When man designs to form religion without the help of reason, he falls immediately into superstition; and if he designs to form religion with reason, he falls inevitably into the abyss of incredulity. So that God, the founder of unique and true religion, has taken His place, and placed man in his relations with

Himself between Charybdis and Scylla—a divine Charybdis and a divine Scylla—and whoever does not navigate in the vessel of which God is the captain and the pilot, becomes lost by a lamentable shipwreck in one or the other of these dangers. This, gentlemen, is my theme for to-day.

When we regard the divers forms of worship disseminated in the world, there are many which do not appear to us to be connected with Catholic doctrine by any relation, although in reality, at a more or less distant epoch, they have come from the common trunk; for error is but a leaf fallen from the tree of truth, and carried along by the wind; and man is so incapable of holding intercourse by himself with God, that his most personal religious inspirations become always re-united to a primitive stock, even when our eye, in the dim light of history, does not distinctly discern the exact hour when the branch fell from the trunk, nor the cause of that separation. When, then, in regarding all the forms of religious worship, we set aside for particular observation those which have no visible and easily recognizable ties of kindred with Catholic doctrine, we are struck with one thing—it is that externally nothing appears to distinguish them from us. I see temples which endeavor to bear, even to God, a magnificent invitation from man to descend towards him; altars adorned with images and bathed in the blood of the holocaust; priests, ceremonies, ablutions, processions, a thousand forms which bear a family likeness, and appear to confound all those forms of worship together and with ours in one common majesty.

But when the sanctuary is opened, its interior exposed to view in the same way as a fruit is opened, that it may be ascertained if its savor answers to its beauty—when, I say, the interior of these forms of worship which are foreign to Catholic doctrine is made visible, what is



found there? In the first place, nothing. Nothing is found there; for I call it nothing to communicate with God in order to remain as you were before, to build temples, to immolate victims, to create priesthoods, to set up in the hearts of nations a vast preparation—and what then? To arrive at remaining men, to possess in the intelligence and in the heart nothing superhuman, nothing which announces any other thing than the most vulgar humanity. Ah! gentlemen, a simple intercourse with an elevated soul modifies our own—it elevates us: we cannot draw near to great hearts without there exhaling from them something which penetrates even to us, and renders us more worthy of their contact with us, and you would have it that intercourse with God could be inefficacious, although real! What good, then, arises from communicating with him? What is so sublime an object which produces results so null? If man is but a man with God, what need has he to seek Him? The effect answers to the cause, and where I find nothing for effect, I cannot conclude so as to admit the presence and the concurrence of the Divinity, since God and nothing are perfectly in negation the one to the other. The grandeur of the religious preparation only renders the interior void more visible, and man betrays himself so much the more by covering his wretchedness with the name and the attributes of God.

That it is so, gentlemen, with regard to the forms of which I speak, that their inefficacy in divine things is a positive and a palpable fact, I have no need to show. It will suffice to recall their names to your minds. Beyond the pale of Catholic doctrine, and of the rivulets and branches detached from that great stream, what remains? Brahminism, Polytheism, Islamism—celebrated names it is true, but names which do not designate to your conscience any action which has elevated the human race

above its proper nature. Yet this default of efficacy is not their greatest misfortune.

By a law, the reason of which is not difficult to comprehend, every form of worship which does not elevate man degrades him; intercourse with God is an instrument too powerful to end with a negative result. If God did not attract man, even to His holiness, man would cause Him to descend even to sharing and sanctioning his most vile inclinations. From thence arises that amazing scandal of the forms of worship employed for the corruption of man, a scandal which cannot be disguised, because it is not the same with the moral as with the intellectual order. This relates to the infinite, upon which discussion is always more or less admissible; the other directly embraces only our relations with ourselves and with our fellow-creatures. Simple relations, upon which interest enlightens us when sentiment is wanting. Well, in examining Brahminism, Polytheism, and Islamism by that light of the moral order, what do we see? Not only man continuing in his native weakness, but man invited to corruption by the very worship destined to mingle his life with that of God; man finding in God a shameful assistance in his course of falling lower than his spirit and flesh, or, at least, in consecrating all the follies of his understanding, and all the delirium of his senses. Even Islamism, although posterior to Jesus Christ, has lowered the morals of Mahometan nations, under certain heads, below the morals of antiquity. To such an extent is it impossible for a false form of worship, in whatever time it may be formed, not to become subject to that law of immorality by which God distinguishes those who falsely exercise upon nations the power of His name.

Unreasonableness is the third character of superstition; and here, gentlemen, you will, perhaps, be tempted to retort against me what I said but just now—that, in the

intellectual order, discussion is always more or less possible; from whence it would follow, that the want of reason would be a very debatable sign of superstition. I do not retract my idea, gentlemen; for, although in all places where the infinite is found present and engaged, there may be a field opened for discussion, nevertheless there is a certain limit where unreasonableness would become visible at the first glance. The mind which wanders in the subtle clouds of metaphysics does not hesitate before the absurd in a perfect state of nudity. Now it is this want of reason, palpable and braving the intelligence, which is the third character of superstition, and which is instantaneously visible in Brahminism, Polytheism and Islamism. However, gentlemen, I do not intend to take, one by one, the books and the dogmas of the divers forms of worship, in order to show their evident want of rationality; that course would be too long; and as I have already said, in the debate between religious error and truth, God has abridged all. I abandon, then, the question of positive unreasonableness; I consent to respect absurdity, inasmuch as absurdity is necessary to too many among men; there is a greater evil, perhaps, than absurdity—a more lamentable sign than positive want of reason—it is the negative want of reason—that is to say, the absolute powerlessness of a doctrine to make for itself foundations capable of sustaining a discussion. Now, this want of foundation—that state of things under which we place our hands, without feeling any support for it—is the proper and manifest character of all the forms of worship which have no kind of connection with Catholic doctrine. I propose to you, gentlemen, a curious and useful exercise of thought; in reflecting on Brahminism, on Polytheism, on Islamism, make a conscientious effort to give to each any kind of basis; you will certainly not succeed in doing so.

When Christianity found itself face to face with Polytheism—doctrine against doctrine—people against people—in that drama so serious, so terrible, and so bloody—whenever it became necessary to enter into discussion—Christianity was powerless to do any other thing than to laugh. Our apostles and our apologists passed jestingly by the side of that establishment, so prodigious by its material strength, infiltrated into the blood of nations, and become an integral part of their laws, their customs, their arts, their glory, and all their treasured recollections. Notwithstanding that formidable existence, discussion was impossible, and argument never rose higher than an expression of pity. That absolute absence of logical substance was clearly seen when the emperor Julian, a man of ability, if ever there was one, determined at any cost to resuscitate expiring Polytheism. Certainly, the work was great—the man powerful; Pagan doctrine was about to be seen supported and revived by genius; what did Julian, however? For his personal share he went often into the temple; he offered sacrifices, swung the censers, ranged the priests in procession, whom he had endowed most richly; he renovated the altars—he regilded the statues—and sometimes, having arrived with all the pomp of his court in a town celebrated for its worship of the gods, expecting a spectacle worthy of his ideas and of the religion of which he bore with himself the last resources, he found, as he himself complains in one of his letters, a sacrificer modestly carrying a goose to the abandoned altars! That miserable yet talented man imagined nothing better, in addition to a disguised persecution, and a sterile invitation to imitate the virtues of the Christians, than ceremonies against a doctrine propagated by legions of apostles, writers, and martyrs. The part of his friends, the professors of rhetoric and the philosophers, was still more melancholy than his own, because they had not even



the boldness of his faith. They did not say: Yes—we believe in Jupiter; yes, we believe in Mars, in Mercury, in Apollo; let these divinities of our ancestors eternally remain upon the face of the world by their own power alone. We recognize them, we venerate them, we bend before the faith of the nations which have adored them from the beginning! They did not so speak; they did not dare to go openly and courageously to encounter the absurd and support it, at the very least, with the magnanimity of their adhesion. They did not dare to do what we do now; we Christians, who are, in our turn, accused of absurdity; we do not disown the thrice holy God, who has fallen from heaven for us, and who has fallen lower than ever Jupiter, or Apollo, or Mercury fell, because He fell upon the cross. We so recognize Him—we so venerate Him—we so love Him—we willingly bear for Him all the scorn of the world—and, during eighteen hundred years, we defend Him against His enemies, by the constancy of our unfailing adoration.

This is real strength—this is how a worship is supported or raised up, and not as the Alexandrian philosophers did with Polytheism, by a philosophy which disavowed its existence and its nature. You will, perhaps, tell me that even I call philosophy to the help of religion; but it is a philosophy which accepts all the truth of the dogma—which declares it—which neither repudiates nor eludes anything which belongs to it. And, gentlemen, it is not even a philosophy. I do not set up religion upon a system hatched in the head of a man, and which will pass away quicker even than he. I base it upon common sense and upon the palpable realities of this world. This is all my armor, with the addition of the cry of faith. Before you, who do not believe—mortals born but yesterday, and to-morrow promised to death, leaves borne upon all the shores of the seas, uncertain of yourselves



and of all—I stand up with a degree of boldness which does not even want courage. I know from whence I come, and whither I go. I have my faith against your doubts, and that which appears to you absurd, worthless, degraded, dead—that dust even—that which is less than dust, if it be possible, I take—I place it upon the altar—I command you to approach, and not one among you is sufficiently strong to be certain within himself that he will not come.

Yet once more it is thus that a worship is defended and built up, when it feels itself supported by truth. But if Alexander raises the *posse comitatus* of his professors of rhetoric to transform Jupiter into I know not what abstract power, and Apollo into some other metaphysical or natural personification, men of ability would easily be able to recognize the invention in those puerile semblances of a faith which is ashamed of itself; but humanity, undisturbed, having been charmed for a moment by that ingenious noise, will retire to rest in the evening, and in the morning, on waking, will ask what has become of the artists of yesterday.

Islamism, doubtless, differs from Polytheism by a substance less void; it has evidences of the Christianity which surrounded its cradle. But, again, you will seek in vain in Mahomet for a foundation of which the most humble or the boldest reason accepts the responsibility. That man stands alone, before and after; nothing of him intermingles with the nerves and the muscles of humanity; remove him, there is a chapter less in the history of the world; but a chapter which does not destroy the thread of the narrative; Mahomet is an anecdote. From thence, gentlemen, arises the abhorrence which the civilized world feels towards an apostate. Have you ever thought of what it is to be an apostate? You perhaps think it is a man who changes his religion? Ah! gentlemen, but we

do nothing but call upon men to leave their religions, and embrace ours. Our missionaries travel over the whole world with that sole object; and assuredly no one would accuse them of following the shameful occupation of making apostates. What, then, is an apostate? And what is the cause of the inexpressible scorn which is attached to that name? An apostate, gentlemen, is a man who passes over from a worship having bases in the intelligence, the heart, and in the history of humanity, to a worship empty and evidently incapable of operating any persuasion. The apostate is the man who abandons the ground where discussion is possible between reasonable beings, to lose himself in a region in which even the language of teaching is wanting to error; it is the man who passes from an uncertain clearness, if you will, to darkness which is more than certain; in the order of truth, it is the deserter, the fugitive, the traitor, the man who tramples his country under his feet. Jesus Christ is from henceforth the sole country of the man baptized into His light. We may pardon those who doubt with regard to Him, but we shall not pardon those who abandon Him for another; for how should men have faith in Brahma or in Mahomet, when they have no faith in Jesus Christ?

The rational poverty of the forms of worship foreign to Catholic doctrine entirely reveals itself by their helplessness in resisting the proselytizing influence of the Christian nations. I see that Mahomet protects his work by declaring those to have merited death who shall convert a Mussulman. Rome and Greece had employed the same arms; China and the adjacent countries do not even confide in the laws which, in separating them from the foreigner, separate them also from all contact with Christianity. India, materially open to Christians, opposes the brazen wall of its castes to their communications; nowhere have the forms of worship which the sign of the

cross does not strengthen dared to contend with the religion emanated from Christ ; they are like those hordes of the steppes, which retreat before civilization in proportion as it advances ; or to those ancient Parthians, whose strength was in flight, and in the desert. Thus, before Catholic strategy no foreign worship keeps its standards elevated and floating ; persecution, banishment, silence—these are their only resources—resources which time, in connection with truth, destroys daily, and which, exhausted in the end, will leave them without defence and without refuge against the sovereign contact of our persuasion.

If you ask me, gentlemen, from whence have come those superstitions, stripped of efficacy, of morality, and of reason, I shall tell you in one word ; they are born of the religious passion, combining by a private and popular inspiration, the divine elements scattered abroad in the world, attracting them, making them co-ordinate, and distributing them at will. Man has always before him, at the very least, the remains of truth, passing traditions ; he stirs that dust like the alchemist ; he mixes gold and lead, heaven and earth ; he blows upon them with a corrupted mouth, until he has produced a mixture which at the same time contains the charm of error and some vestiges of truth !

I invite you now to another spectacle. Superstition wearies man ; he seeks the remedy in his reason, and then a still deeper abyss opens before him—the abyss of incredulity.

A young man has reached the age of fifteen, his reason is awakened ; he has lived some days in antiquity, and read some pages of the present history of the world. He has not found it difficult to perceive that superstition held an important position in the history of his kind ; but his eyes, still but partially open, have not distinguished truth

from error—the appearance from the reality. He commences by a great act ; he denies, and as the characteristic of youth is being without measure, being infinite in its conceptions and desires, he denies all ; he denies his father and his mother in their faith, his country in its past, all that mankind has done up to himself, all the movement which has borne him towards God ; and alone, independent, absolute monarch of his person, he surveys that great empire with satisfaction ; he is master, in fine, and is about to edify.

But he will not edify ; he does not even feel the want edifying ; his incredulity is accepted. It is the first and the highest degree of incredulity ; his incredulity is accepted, he is contented. God has placed him in the world ; God has poured upon him that drop of milk and wormwood which is life ; God has given him a father and a mother, brothers and sisters, a country, a destiny, his intelligence, all that he is, all ; but he does not think that he owes God anything, or that he is any other thing but a stranger in His eyes. And if he considers all that religious fermentation of humanity which unceasingly seeks God, which feels certain of having found him, which has placed in him its dearest hopes and its most sacred duties, he does not hesitate to enjoy the contemplation, because, having withdrawn from it, he thinks himself greater than all the nations so childishly surrendered to such poor wants, and to such despicable gratitude towards God : God, who is of so little account, who has only made the world, even if he be willing to admit that He has made it ! I do not in any way, gentlemen, combat this incredulity—I am silent with regard to it ; but I draw from it this conclusion, that whenever man lifts himself up with his pure and personal reason before God, that reason forsakes God, and can no longer communicate with God. I say no more ; I now accept incredulity as incredulity accepts



itself; God has placed it in my hand that I may make use of it in favor of my faith, as a proof of the superhuman origin of religion. Yes; my son of fifteen years, remain incredulous; humanity stands in need of thy revolt, in order to be confirmed in its obedience; and till the day comes when thou wilt see thy error, mankind will regard thee to assure itself that reason is incapable of creating religion.

Nevertheless, gentlemen, incredulity does not remain long in that state of acceptance in which it exists in a soul of fifteen or twenty years old. As we grow older, we discover in life more profound wants; years in leaving us, reveal to us unknown shores within ourselves; and incredulity, at first so joyous, begins to dissolve into a kind of torment, similar to that which is caused by absence from one's country. We turn and turn upon the bed of doubt; this is incredulity at its second state, which I shall call unaccepted incredulity. What would you? We are born in a sceptic epoch, in which we are surrounded only by books and language which treat God as a little child! But God has no need of man; he grows alone in the soul, by a silent and sublime vegetation which belongs to Him alone; His roots attract its purest substance; and some day, the unquiet man bends towards that painful guest, striving by his reason to resume intimate intercourse with Him.

This phenomenon, gentlemen, became visible towards the end of the last century in huge proportions. Assuredly no age had ever indulged in incredulity more perfectly accepted; and yet, see what man is! Hardly had the revolution made of French society an open battle-field, when the very men who had destroyed everything, the most ardent among them, were alarmed at the absence of God. A man, whose name I shall not pronounce, found a pencil in a pool of blood; he took it in his dishonored



hand, and, mounting by a ladder to the pediment of a temple, he there wrote this confession : *The French nation recognizes the existence of the Supreme Being.* God willed that it should be that cold and bloody hand which should render to Him, in the most impious moment in all history, an unexceptional testimony. The example being given, other men strove to found a national worship. Theo-philanthropy sprang into existence. I beg pardon of you for pronouncing that barbarous name : God condemns the men who reject the truth, to savage names as well as to vain works. Theo-philanthropy endeavored then to found a rational worship, and when God presented to France the young consul who was to recognize it, that philosophical and religious sect came, like all the rest, to offer themselves to him. The young man addressed but these words to them : "Gentlemen, you number but four hundred ; how do you suppose that I can make a religion with four hundred men ?" Thus, in so grave a moment, the rational religion was only able to count four hundred disciples, and it required but a word to reduce them to nothingness, so that they should never after be heard of.

Other events followed ; our time approached the gates of dawn. We sprang into existence, and, with our generation, a crowd of souls, who also rejected this accepted incredulity. They united to resume the work of founding a religion upon the only reason. You have seen the experiment of it ; it has been attempted under your own eyes once or twice ; I say once or twice, I could say more often, without fearing to be mistaken : but it is only necessary to take notice of experiments which have had some extent and authenticity. You have then seen *savants* and men of ability assembled in this capital hovering round it, and inviting to themselves without any regard for appearances, the young and ardent souls who struggled against incredulity ; you have seen them sacrifice their

time, their fortune, their future to the realization of a worship worthy, they thought, of an age affected with regard to God, but willing only to receive him from the hands of science and of genius. Well! You may all know; how many years have those edifiers, despairing of their work, required to recover their social position, and to succeed in peopling all the civil administrations of their finished apostolate and of their dissolved paternity?

These experiments, as solemn as they were fruitless, have not yet persuaded our age of its powerlessness to create religion, so much does man stand in need of the help of God, even when his pride rejects belief in Him. Every day we hear the future religion of mankind announced; if they cannot produce it, at least they prophesy its coming. They transform powerlessness into hope. But mankind has no time to spend in waiting; it desires God for to-day, and not for to-morrow. It has hungered and thirsted after God for six thousand years; and you appearing so late, when you set yourselves about the work of providing for wants so deeply felt, for aspirations which centuries have not weakened, you are still reduced to prophecies! For me, all that which does not furnish humanity with its daily bread, I do not believe in. I believe that God has been Father from the beginning for the soul as well as for the body; I believe that the harvests are all come, that the rain has all fallen, that in the order of truth, as in the order of nature, man not only hungers, but is also satisfied when he wills it. The bread is ready; God has kneaded it with His own hands; that which is wanting is the will to take it as God has prepared it. Men prefer to prepare it according to their own tastes; they ask from reason that which reason cannot give them. Poland had more sense when it was divided; it said: "God is too high, and France too far off." This, gentlemen, is the final phrase which explains all that powerless-

ness of man to place himself by his own unaided means in a positive intercourse with God. God is too high, and reason too far off.

I shall conclude by a consideration of Protestantism, another human effort to escape from incredulity, by constituting a rational relation between man and God.

Assuredly nothing was more natural and more simple than the idea of Luther. Luther said implicitly or explicitly, for it matters little whether a man knows or does not know what he does, Luther said: "Reason, quite alone, is unable to communicate with God; it needs an element divine, transnatural, foreign to its own conception, because in the very first place, there must be two to establish a communication. Humanity should then present its intelligence and its heart to God; but it is evident that if God has not, on His part, given His intelligence and His heart, religion is the most manifestly absurd of all chimeras. Whoever says communication, says concurrence—whoever says concurrence, says reciprocal meeting; religion is the reciprocal meeting of man and God, God having necessarily commenced first, because He is the oldest, the strongest, and the most instructed. Religion should, then, contain something of man, but also something of God. Now, if there is anything in the world of God, it is evidently the Gospel. The Gospel is the most pure, the most gentle, the most efficacious language which is in the world; God is there, or else he is absent from all. Let us, then, take the Gospel for the part of God in religion; man, on his side, will give his heart and his reason. What more is necessary? The Gospel and reason—the Gospel speaking to reason—reason replying to the Gospel. What more simple, more gentle, and more magnificent intercourse could there be? Communication, life, reality, all is accomplished. No intermediation between God and yourselves. No more popedom

or priesthood, no question between the State and the Church; and, notwithstanding, there is a real and holy means which conducts man to God, and brings back God to man." What a masterpiece, gentlemen! What can be a more marvellous solution of the problem of a rational worship?—a simple marriage between the Gospel and reason! Therefore, the success was great; all Europe was in agitation, and we must not explain those great movements of the world by secondary causes; they have always for a lever some extraordinary and fruitful element which makes its appearance in them. The combination of Luther, in satisfying the religious passion of man, flatters his reason, his pride, and his liberty; it should have moved the universe.

But let us approach the conclusion. Time has passed over that rich conception; it has undergone, in the general movement of men and things, the decisive trial which shows where is life, and where death. What is Protestantism now? Has it not struck upon one of the two shoals prepared by God against religious error? Has it avoided, at the same time, superstition and incredulity? I appeal for the answer to any one who is acquainted with the dogmatic history of the last three centuries, and the present state of human things. On one hand, Protestantism, by virtue even of its principle, because it has rejected all authority between man and God, has ended in producing the most frightful doctrinal dissolution of which there is any illustration. All has been denied in the name of Protestantism; not only the Christian dogmas and sacraments, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Divinity of the Word, original sin, but even the truths of the natural order which regard God and our immortal destinies. After having commenced by contradictory confessions of faith, they have ended by no longer being able even to set up contradiction for their symbol, to such an extent has



incredulity made progress, and corroded all dogmatism even to the bones. All, however, have not followed that inclination; others trying to keep from it, but wanting an authority which might regulate their faith, have attained, by private and popular inspiration, to the most extravagant and most superstitious mysticism. You know the scenes which have taken place in America—those men and women gathered together in apocalyptic assemblies, prophesying, speaking all languages—in fine, exhibiting to the astonished world the delirium of the minds who seek God without God.

I do not pretend, gentlemen, that, besides these two classes, there do not exist Protestants who have remained faithful to many evangelical truths, and who are also preserved from superstition and infidelity. It should be so, and it is so. But a doctrine must not be judged by individual results, it must be judged by its general effects—by the great current of its influence and of its action. There are Protestants who follow, without knowing it, quite another principle than the dissolvent principle of Protestantism; who accept, by the road of authority, a part of the truths of faith—who, protected by a happy nature, and a still more happy ignorance, nourished by the Gospel, accustomed to perform good works, keep themselves on the surface of that troubled ocean, and, thanks to their good faith, may one day present to God a conscience which has remained pure and Roman Catholic, without their knowledge. These are exceptions to which the most miserable errors are subject; as God causes the dew to fall into the poisoned calyx of a flower, he has also caused the good and the true to descend even into the corruption of truth. There are Catholics amongst Protestants, as there are Protestants among Catholics; that is to say, on both sides, men who follow a principle contradictory to that of their exterior and avowed faith. But Protestantism, nevertheless,



remains the high-road of incredulity and superstition, as Catholicism remains the high-road of a faith as rational as it is profound.

I will establish, next Sunday, this last point, which still remains for us to prove. I shall show you Catholic doctrine as strong against superstition as against incredulity, assuring the mind against doubt, delivering it from delirium, calling souls to itself from these two sides of the horizon ; and in that serene and majestic equilibrium—superior to reason, which neither founded nor can destroy it ; satisfying it without accepting its yoke ; enlightening and awakening it, without changing its nature ; mother, sister, and daughter of all truth ; God and man together—impelling generations, at an equal pace, towards their human and their eternal future.

## TWENTY-EIGHTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE RELIGION PRODUCED IN THE SOUL BY CATHOLIC  
DOCTRINE.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

I HAD, in concluding, to establish three things: first, that religion is a passion and a virtue of humanity; secondly, that, beyond the pale of Catholic doctrine, no other doctrine has produced that virtue of religion; and such has been the object of the two preceding Conferences. It remains for me to establish a third point: namely, that Catholic doctrine produces that positive and efficacious intercourse with God which we call by the name of religion, and to show in consequence that that doctrine avoids the two shoals upon which all the others make shipwreck; namely, superstition and credulity. Now, I shall attain that desired object in proving to you that Catholic doctrine possesses a superhuman efficacy of morals and a superhuman efficacy of reason, which is the fruit of the intercourse which it establishes between man and God.

I do not commence, gentlemen, without feeling within me a certain sadness. For we are assembled together for the last time this year, and your attention, your zeal, the unanimity of your approval, have too much consoled me, for me not to see with regret the hour which will separate

us. But thanks to God, time passes quickly, and, in bearing us towards eternity, it draws us, even here below, to each other. I give you, then, as for to-morrow, a new rendezvous at the foot of this pulpit, which you have so often, during ten years, honored by your assiduity.

It is easy for me, after all that I have said, to show that Catholic doctrine enjoys a superhuman efficacy of morals, in virtue even of the intercourse which it keeps up between man and God. For have I not proved that humility, chastity, the charity of the apostleship, and that of fraternity, are in the soul the exclusive effects of Catholic doctrine? Now, in virtue of what does Catholic doctrine operate this superhuman transformation in the soul? Is it directly? Is it simply because it says to us, Be humble, be chaste, be apostles, be brethren? Ah! gentlemen, but all say this to us more or less earnestly—there is not a man steeped in pride who has not invoked the humility of others; not a man besotted in sensuality who has not invoked the purity of his victims; not a man who has not invoked apostleship to propagate his ideas, and fraternity to found his empire. But the ear of man remains closed to those invitations of selfishness, or to those dreams of reason; it listens to them without hearing; it hears without obeying. Catholic doctrine would have succeeded no better, if it had spoken to man only of man; if it had proposed to him as the spring of action, only his interest, his duty even, and his dignity. To render him humble, chaste, apostle, brother, it has taken his basis outside himself; it has reposed it in God. It is in the name of God, by the power of the relations which it has created between God and ourselves, by the efficacy of its dogmas, of its worship, and of its sacraments, that it changes in us that corpse which rebels against virtue; that it reanimates it, resuscitates it, purifies it, transforms it, clothes it with the glory of Thabor, and having thus

armed it from head to foot, sends it forth into the bustle of the world like a new man still feeble by his nature, but strengthened by God, towards whom his unceasing aspiration ascends. It is thus, gentlemen, that the miracle of our transfiguration is accomplished in Catholic doctrine; humility, chastity, charity, and all the interior elevations which result from these, are but the effects of a higher virtue giving the movement to all the rest. Without religion, without the intercourse of the soul with God, the whole Christian edifice perishes, and, consequently, that intercourse which is the keystone of the arch, is efficacious in a superhuman manner, since it bears man above humanity.

From this time, gentlemen, I may consider my subject as achieved, and conclude firmly, that Catholic doctrine enjoys a superhuman efficacy of morals, which is the fruit of the intercourse which it establishes between us and God. But humility, chastity, the charity of apostleship and of fraternity, obedience, penitence, voluntary poverty, all those virtues of which I have spoken, are but the branches of an unique stream. In conducting you along their course, I have acted like those navigators who explore an unknown country, and ascend the course of its rivers, until, satisfied with their labors, and with their discoveries in detail, they at last descend by the great and wide stream which leads to the ocean.

There is, then, a stream into which merge all those scattered virtues which I have named; and that stream is sanctity. I do not mean ordinary sanctity, which consists in the observance of the divine commandments, and in that conformity of our life with the Gospel, which is enough to save us. I speak of that exalted sanctity, of that which is recognized and venerated even here below, which has its altars, and whose magnificent history is contained in that mysterious book which we call the *Lives of*

*the Saints.* The lives of the saints! Have you ever dwelt, gentlemen, upon that phenomenon of the lives of the saints? We have often heard of the heroes and of the sages of antiquity; we read in Plutarch the lives of illustrious men; we see good men surrounding us; but where shall we discover anything which resembles the saints? Where are the saints of Brahminism, of Polytheism, of Islamism, of Protestantism, of Rationalism? I seek in vain in these doctrines for their name, their appearance, or their imitation. During three centuries in which Protestantism has striven to destroy the true Church, and to usurp its character, it has numbered among its own, honest, and even pious persons, but it has not yet dared to write its legends of saints. As to Rationalism, it is unnecessary to speak of it; it is satisfied with possessing men of ability, and does not aspire to hearing the world ever say, for example, Saint Helvetius, or Saint Diderot.

What, then, are the saints, this new privilege which belongs to us? What is sanctity? Sanctity, gentlemen, is not simply, as I appeared to suggest just now, the confluence of all the Christian virtues in one and the same soul; this is but ordinary sanctity, that which is necessary to the salvation of every Christian, and which I do not intend to speak of here. There is no Christian, when he is in the state of union with God, in whom humility, chastity, and charity do not meet together, in a degree more or less perfect; we then call them pious men; we might even, to speak widely, call them saints; but, in fine, this is not what we understand by that great expression—*the saints!* What, then, are the saints? What, then, is sanctity thus understood?

Sanctity is the love of God and of men carried to a sublime extravagance. And you can easily conceive, gentlemen, that if communion between the infinite and the finite really exist—if the heart of God create a dwelling, and



live in the heart of man, it is impossible, at least in certain souls more ardent than the rest, that the presence of an element so prodigious should not become visible, and produce extraordinary effects, which the weakness of our nature and of our language would constrain us to call extravagant. For, what is the meaning of this word? It means to say *that which goes beyond*—that which is eccentric, to use a modern expression, save that the word extravagant is well formed, whilst the word eccentric is badly formed. The one paints the action which the other defines geometrically; now, a word should be painting, and not geometry. This is why I prefer to use the first, and in this I remain still much below the energy of Saint Paul, who has said, without oratorical precaution, “*that the world not having been willing to know God by wisdom, it hath pleased God to save the world by the foolishness of preaching.*” I shall not venture to say that sanctity is foolishness, even after Saint Paul, because I should fear that you might charge me with going too far; and I am happy to be able to show you to-day that I know how to unite the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove; although to disguise nothing from you, I agree entirely with the sentiment of Saint Francis of Sales, when he said: “My dear Philothea, I would give twenty serpents for one dove.”

There is, then, in sanctity a phenomenon of extravagance, a love of God and men, which wounds human sense. But this, gentlemen, cannot be the unique characteristic of sanctity; extravagance alone would be only singularity, and singularity proves nothing in favor of the man who makes it a part of his actions, if it is not, perhaps, a great deal of vanity and a little of bad education. Extravagance in sanctity should be corrected by another element, and it is, in fact, by the sublime—that is to say, by moral beauty, in its highest degree; by that

beauty which causes the rapture of human sense, so that there is in sanctity something which wounds human sense, and something which enraptures it; something which produces stupor, and something which produces admiration. And these two things are not separated there, like two streams which flow side by side; but the extravagant and the sublime, that which wounds human sense, and that which enraptures it, mingled and dissolved the one with the other, make of sanctity but one tissue, in which it is impossible for the most active spirit of analysis, at the moment when it sees the saint in action, to distinguish that which is extravagant from that which is sublime—that which is sublime from that which is extravagant—that which binds man to earth from that which lifts him up even to God. This is sanctity.

I will give you an example, that you may better understand me.

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, having abandoned the palace of her fathers, and the palace of her husband, confined herself in an hospital to serve the poor of God with her own hands. A leper presented himself; Saint Elizabeth received him, and set herself to wash his dreadful wounds. When she had finished, she took the vase into which she had expressed that which human language cannot even paint, and swallowed it at a draught. Behold, gentlemen, an act which is perfectly extravagant. But remark, first, a thing which you cannot despise—energy. Energy, gentlemen, is the virtue which makes heroes; it is the most vigorous root of the sublime, and, at the same time, the most rare. Nothing is so much wanting to man as energy, and nothing more excites and attracts his respect. You are not wicked beings, but you are feeble beings; and this is why the example of energy is the most salutary that can be given to you, as it is also the one which most excites your admiration. Saint Eliza-

beth, in drinking this leprous draught, performed a great act, because she performed an act of energy. But there was something better there than energy — there was charity. In sanctity, the love of God being inseparable from the love of mankind, since it is no other thing than the excess of this double love, it follows that, in every act of the saints, wherever the sacrifice for God is found, that sacrifice inevitably flows back again upon man. And where was the benefit to man in the act of Saint Elizabeth? Where was it? Do you really ask me? Saint Elizabeth made to that abandoned creature, to that object of unanimous repulsion even in the midst of the ages of faith, she made to him an inexpressible revelation of his greatness; she said to him: “Dear humble brother of God, if, after having washed thy wounds, I take thee into my arms to show thee that thou art my royal brother in Jesus Christ, that would even be a mark of love and fraternity; but an ordinary mark, of which I should restore the benefit to thee alone, who hast been deprived of it from thy infancy, who hast never felt upon thy bosom the bosom in a soul, full of life; but, dear humble brother, I would do for thee that which has never been done for any king in the world, for any man loved and adored. I will drink that which has come from thee, that which no longer belongs to thee, that which was thine, only to be transformed into vile rottenness by its contact with thy misery. I will drink it, as I drink the blood of the Saviour in the holy chalice of our altars.” Behold the sublime, gentlemen, and woe to him who does not understand it! Thanks to Saint Elizabeth, during the whole of eternity, it will be known that a leper has obtained from a daughter of kings more love than beauty has ever conquered upon earth.

After this, if a man of ability treats this action as extravagant, we grant it to him; we have said the same

ourselves ; we are persuaded that it is much more natural to drink a glass of the wine of Château-Margaux with one's friends. But that man of ability will probably die some day ; his writings, perhaps, will not survive him an hour ; his joys and his griefs will be forgotten ; and when Saint Elizabeth dies, kings contest with the poor for her vestments and for memorials of her ; they place a little of her flesh above all treasures ; they encase her remains in gold and precious stones ; they convoke the most celebrated artists of the world to build a habitation of death for her worthy of her life ; and from age to age, princes, *savants*, poets, mendicants, lepers, pilgrims of all ranks, press to her tomb, and leave there, by the fragile contact of their lips, eternal marks of their love. They speak to her as to a living being ; they say to her : Dear sister of God, thou hadst palaces, thou hast left them for us ; thou hadst children, thou hast adopted us ; thou wert highly distinguished, thou hast made thyself our servant ; thou hast loved the poor, the lowly, the wretched ; thou hast placed thy joy in the hearts of those who had none ; and now we render to thee the glory which thou hast given to us ; we restore to thee the love which thou hast lost for us. O, dear sister ! pray for those of thy friends who were not born when thou wert in the world, and who, since then, are come to thee !

Thus is it with all the extravagances of the saints. All profit mankind, at least by example. If the saint fasts, mankind fasts also ; if he condemns himself to absurd abstinences, a portion of mankind is also famished even to absurdity ; if he tortures his body by strange inventions, there are also in your prisons, there are also in your hulks, there are also in your colonies, human bodies tortured by cruel inventions. If the saint, in one word, voluntarily imposes suffering upon himself, alas ! who does not suffer in this world ? and who does not want to learn that God

has hidden even in suffering a healing and a mysterious balm? Is it so vain a service rendered to the human race, to reveal to it all its resources against misfortune, to prove to it, in strange actions, if you will, that whatever condition is prepared for it, whatever dishonor may have been created for it, whatever cells may be dug out for it, there is no suffering, no shame, no abjection, which may not be transformed by the idea of God, and become a throne to which every man may draw near and pray.

That history of the lives of the saints, gentlemen, is not a rare phenomenon, reserved to any time or country; it is a general and a constant phenomenon. Wherever Catholic doctrine takes root, even there where it is placed as a grain of seed between rocks, sanctity appears, and becomes manifest in some souls by fruits which defy the esteem and the scorn of reason. That sublime extravagance dates from a yet higher and more unutterable folly—the folly of a God dying upon a cross, His head crowned with thorns, His feet and His hands pierced, His body bruised and mutilated. Since then, that contagion has not ceased to choose victims in the world, but by a singular and jealous preference, it chooses them only from the bosom of the Catholic Apostolic Roman Church. To us alone has remained the heritage of the cross, the living tradition of voluntary martyrdom, the dignity of extravagance, and the glory of the sublime. And although we do not all drink long draughts of this generous wine, we all dip our lips into it, and bring back into life some portion of the divine poison. No one is mistaken in this regard, all recognize us by this sign; the cross has never suffered any imitation or counterfeit.

Ah, gentlemen, the world is not silent in this matter, it does not try to snatch this treasure from us, it endeavors only to make of it a reason against us, and an instrument of oppression. What does it now say when we claim, for



all our works, the common right? What arms does it bring against us? It does not contest the right with us, it does not deny that liberty is written in the nature and in the constitution of the country. But it says to us: We cannot compete with you in virtues and devotedness; you have in your essence inconceivable resources, the secret of which we do not possess; and consequently, as there is no equality existing between you and ourselves, liberty should be refused to you as a compensation in our favor. We must enchain you, in order to establish the equilibrium of human powers; and yet, even when your hands are bound to the wall, we are not sure that they will not be longer than our own. Such is, gentlemen, you know it, the present language of the world, and to whom is it addressed besides ourselves? What other institution is able to take pride in a servitude which has for justification the grandeur even of virtue? The world is right; we are the only sons of Christ. As they nailed Him by the hands and by the feet to hinder Him from saving the world, it is just that they should attach His true posterity to the cross. And as yet we do not see the end. Whatever may arrive in the fleeting times in which we live, do not believe that the persecution by incredulity against the faith will cease before that which has been seen and done up to this time. As it is in the nature of things and in the general movement of the world, that all principles which are contained therein, from henceforth develop themselves rapidly from day to day, the inequality of morals and practices, between the Church and that which is not of her, will become more apparent, and the superhuman supremacy of the Church growing more and more intolerable, will draw upon her from her enemies a more perfect and more glorious persecution. The Scriptures have predicted this for us, and not a single line of the Scriptures will pass away. The day will come

when men will not be contented with denying us a right—they will deny us all rights; the world, tired of obeying us in spite of itself and of respecting us in spite of itself, will make a last effort to shake off from its skin the leprosy of Divinity. But then, as now, the virtue of God will help us; bound, powerless, without motion, that virtue will flow from us as it flowed from the robe of Christ, even when we are silent and motionless by the very effect of our bondage, like a perfume which you have desired to shut up, and which condensed by the obstacle, escapes by all the pores, smelling sweeter and stronger; also, like a spring which has been closed up, and whose waters spout upwards, even to the sky. Thus, when the whole world shall join together to close up the divine fountain of sanctity, as it did once the tomb of the Saviour, on the third day the water will make for itself a new passage, and the undeceived human races will come to drink from its longer, wider, and more mighty and ungovernable stream.

As, gentlemen, the heart of God expanding in the heart of man produces sanctity, a mixture of extravagance and the sublime, so when the intelligence of God descends into the intelligence of man, it should necessarily introduce there something which can neither be created nor demonstrated by reason. Now that which can neither be created nor demonstrated by reason, has evidently a character of extravagance, a character which belongs, without any question, to Catholic doctrine. What does it teach us, in effect? One God in three persons; a God who made the world from nothing; a man who brought ruin upon all his race by one personal fault; a God who became man, who was crucified to expiate crimes of which he bore no responsibility; a God present under the appearances of bread and wine. What dogmas, gentlemen! and yet this is all the architecture of Catholic doc-

trine. It is too evident that reason has created none of these dogmas, and that it will be unable of its own power to demonstrate any one of them. And it should be so; for if Catholic doctrine were a work of reason, it would not be a superhuman work; if it were a system of philosophy, it would not be a religion. Instead of dogmas, you would have the theorems of mathematics; and instead of being here, you would be at home; because you would find nothing here which you would not find at home. You are here, because your reason has not made dogmas, because it can neither make them nor demonstrate them, because they are superior to all reason; you are here precisely because I have extravagant things to say to you.

Our adversaries think to frighten us very much by that single word: But that which you advance is extravagant! I believe it; and what should I have to say to you, if I had nothing extravagant to say? Of what use would all this religious preparation be, if I had nothing to teach you besides that which man, while stirring the brands of his own fire, might know by himself? What is religion, what is intercourse with God, if it leaves our minds just at the point where it found them? God would have placed Himself in communication with us, and ourselves with Him, for the reciprocal satisfaction on the one side of giving nothing; on the other of receiving nothing. You see, gentlemen, that the supposition is devoid of sense, and that it is necessary to come back again to that celebrated saying of a doctor: *Credo quia absurdum—I believe it, because it is absurd.* The expression is too strong, but it is easy to reduce its exaggeration, and to comprehend that in effect, if there were nothing which was extravagant in the doctrine, it would not be believed, it would simply be seen. To believe, something which surpasses reason is necessary; and whatever surpasses

reason will possess evidently, for reason, a character of extravagance. This is why Saint Paul said: "*If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise.*"<sup>1</sup>

Well, you will say to me: This is a great merit; it is exactly the merit of superstition which you combated but just now in noting its unreasonableness. I proceed, gentlemen, to show you the difference between them.

In the first place, we believe our dogmas. Whilst you, *savants* and philosophers, do not believe in the proper inventions of your own intelligence, which doubt undermines incessantly by a silent infiltration: we, priests of Jesus Christ, the faithful of the Catholic Church, believe sincerely those dogmas which our reason has not made and which it does not demonstrate to itself. We have believed them during eighteen centuries, even to giving our blood for them. This is assuredly a great marvel: the doubt of reason with regard to its own works, the faith of reason towards works which are not its own! But this is not all; not only do we believe our dogmas, but we propose them to you, and we cause you to believe them—you men of reason, men of pride, men indignant at our extravagance. Some day you will come here, some day you will bring to us upon your knees the voluntary adoration of that which you before hated and despised. No one constrains you. And this inconceivable phenomenon of the conversion of reason to extravagance does not happen obscurely in some lost souls, it happens every day, in face of the sun in a multitude of minds. There is not an hour in the existence of the Church in which she does not receive the embraces of those who had long rebelled against her, in which she does not engender faith and love in her actual enemies, a happy mother who is recognized by those to whom she

<sup>1</sup> 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 3, v. 18.

has not given suck, who is clasped in the arms of those who inflicted blows and wounds upon her. They come to her by blasphemy as by blessing, in the strength of the vigorous time of life, as the result of the long watchings of intelligence, the experience of statesmen, the illuminations of the man of genius. They come to her, as a vessel enters the port after the tempest of a long navigation. They give to her the last view of the intelligence; the last impulsion of the heart; the firm and steady palpitation of the soul, which has found what it sought, and which sits down to repose. Such has been her lot from Saint Paul to Bossuet.

What say you of it, gentlemen? Is not this a superhuman efficacy? For, in fine, who is able to make you believe? What arms or what art does Catholic doctrine possess for laying hold of you, who have a distaste for her, for persuading you to accept dogmas inaccessible to your reason? What witchcraft has she thrown upon you? Who has placed in her hands the means of which she disposes, and by which she incites you, as the supreme effort of your destiny, to adore extravagance?

It is true that her pretension is not only to cause you to believe in her dogmas, but also to render account of them to your reason, all superior as they may be to it. For, as in the order of morals, extravagance should be united to the sublime, so is it necessary that in the order of truth extravagance should not be separated from the highest light. This is why Catholic doctrine, which has not created its dogmas and which does not demonstrate them, presents them notwithstanding to reason when once accepted by it, as the supreme science of nature and of humanity, as the knot of all mysteries, the key of all explanation, the tie of all co-ordination of thought, the masterpiece of the understanding, without which *the light itself shines in darkness*, according to the expression of



Saint John. As the orb of day illuminates all without being illuminated by anything, so Catholic doctrine, the chief flambeau of the world, sheds upon all who do not close their eyes a sovereign irradiation, which enraptures them, and discovers to them, with the horizon of eternity, the no less mysterious horizon of time. From thence springs a body of men as new as the saints, mingling together the most profound philosophy and the most ardent faith; such as Saint Augustine, Saint Anselm, Saint Thomas, Saint Bonaventure, and all who are like them; men, bold as the philosopher, and simple as the child, retreating before no question, having no fear of doubt, hearing all and answering all, building up by affirmation the great edifice of truth, defending it by a daily polemic against every comer and every assailant. Catholic doctrine is the only one which has produced that race of men; before it and outside its pale there are no more theologians than there are saints. Theologians are in the order of truth, what saints are in the order of morals; they are destined to establish the supremacy of reason which is in Catholic doctrine, as the saints are destined to manifest its moral superiority. In proportion as the world gives birth to illustrious men of letters to combat the doctrine of God, the Church gives birth to illustrious theologians to keep them in check, to oppose genius to genius, science to science, reason to reason, and to assure at least to our dogmas the honor of a combat which never ends.

Thus we pass, from age to age, across the most civilized nations, affirming and discussing; affirming our dogmas as coming from God, discussing them as if they did not come from Him; elevating reason above itself, descending even to it, to give it pleasure, equally strong by extravagance and by reasoning, rejected by the one, feared by the other, respected by both. If error presses us too hard,

if at any time, in the course of ages, a vacillation be felt in the fullness of our life, we assemble a council, again another phenomenon which is seen only in us, of which no doctrine would bear the trial. Whilst you dispute, we deliberate. Our aged men, chiefs and judges of doctrine, sitting down in a circle of arm-chairs, bend the knee before God, invoke the Holy Ghost, listen to a solemn discussion in presence of the universe which watches them, and standing up for the last time, sure of themselves and of God, magistrates of truth, they pronounce the judgment which unites all minds, and place a stone against which no one shall ever fall without being broken.

I resume, gentlemen. I had to show that Catholic doctrine, in the intercourse which it establishes between man and God, avoids at the same time the danger of superstition and that of incredulity. I have done so. For superstition is an inefficacious intercourse of man with God ; inefficacious as to morals and as to reason : now I have proved that Catholic doctrine enjoyed a superhuman efficacy of morals, and a superhuman efficacy of reason, a demonstration from whence results also its power against incredulity, since it causes the most civilized nations to believe dogmas which surpass the human intelligence, and that in permitting to them a discussion which the doctrine itself undertakes the first.

It remains for us to draw the general consequences of these long premises. They are these :

Religion is a passion of humanity ; then it is true. It is true, because there is nothing natural to humanity which is not true. Without doubt man, and even humanity, is subject to exaggerate his passions, to vitiate them by excess ; but a passion being but a movement of nature towards an object, it would be impossible if the object did not exist, and impossible also if the object were not within the scope of our own powers ; by the fact

alone that it is, the object of it is certain, and our relation with it is also certain. It is only necessary to ascertain whether that relation be not vitiated. Now, into the religious passion, as in every other, man has introduced excesses, that which is false, and puerile, and disgraceful; how, then, is the true religion to be discerned? Evidently by its fruits, by its efficacy. Religion, which is the intercourse of man with God, could not, if that intercourse be real, produce anything great and singular in the human race. Now the Catholic religion alone is endowed with a superhuman efficacy of morals and of reason; alone it has elevated man to all that he can be, and to something more; all the other religions fall into superstition, or dissolve themselves into incredulity; then the Catholic religion is the only true religion. This deduction is simple and within the comprehension of all minds, as are also the facts which form its base and its body. Two questions and two answers are sufficient. Is religion a want, a passion of humanity? Yes; then it is true. Is the Catholic religion alone endowed with an efficacy worthy of God and worthy of man? Yes; then it alone is true. The others are but a degeneration of it due to the liberty of man, who has not been able to renounce all intercourse with God, and who has not been able to keep himself at the height of that intercourse.

You are witnesses to this, gentlemen; at each step which we take in the study of Catholic doctrine, we are always forced to conclude that it possesses the characteristics which are proper to it, and which no other has been able to attribute to itself. Every one of our Conferences already, during many years, has borne to you a new proof. Each time, I say, there is a sign which is seen but in us. Whence is this, gentlemen? Why does one doctrine only gather around its head a halo so rich, so varied, whilst no other has the talent of taking away even one of its rays?

It is, gentlemen, because truth is all, and error is nothing. Truth is a deep well ; the more it is dug, the more the water gushes out ; whilst error is but a broken cistern as the Scripture says, *cisternæ dissipatæ*. Dig a little, you will find no more water ; and the water even which is at the surface is impure water. But the true religion, the religion which God has made, He has based deeply in the centre of humanity, like the primitive rocks of granite which support the world ; He has hidden there a divine fire, and a divine spring of water ; a fire which He has commanded to burn without consuming itself ; a spring of water which He has commanded to flow unceasingly. In proportion as we dig deeper into those abysses of wisdom and of love, we shall discover new veins, unknown streams, reservoirs without bounds ; until when piercing through the centre, having struck the last blow, the water will gush out even to the heights of heaven ; and, satisfying our thirst without quenching it, will bear us towards that God who has blessed our soul, and who waits for it.

OF THE  
EFFECTS OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE  
UPON SOCIETY.





## TWENTY-NINTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE INTELLECTUAL PUBLIC SOCIETY FOUNDED BY  
CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

MY LORDS,<sup>1</sup>

GENTLEMEN,

Up to this time we have considered the effects of Catholic doctrine upon the mind and upon the soul of man ; upon his mind by a certainty, and by knowledge superior to purely human certainty and knowledge ; upon his soul by virtues which do not come from his nature, and which, on this account, we have called reserved virtues.

But however great may be these two stages upon which the action of Catholic doctrine is produced, they are nevertheless, not the last upon which it manifests its preponderance. - There is another field more vast, more profound, more striking, more solemn, more incontestable, where all meet together, which decides all : it is society. For man is not a solitary being ; he is not scattered by hazard to live and die under the shadow of a solitary rock or a forest ; he rises into life in the midst of society, which receives him, which nourishes him, which educates him, which communicates to him its ideas, its passions, its vices, its virtues, and to which he leaves, with his ashes and his memory, the influence of his life. From whence

<sup>1</sup> Messieurs l'Archeveque de Chalcedome et les Eveques de La Rochelle and de Montpellier.

it follows, that to have considered man in the secret home of his intelligence and of his heart, is not yet to have full knowledge of him, not, above all, to know the doctrine which has been the principle of his activity. To complete the test, we must pass from within to without, from the solitary being to the social being. Society is the confluence of all the ideas and of all the movements of man; the public manifestation of his worth, and of the value of the teaching from which he has derived his interior development. This is why, gentlemen, it is necessary for us to see what Catholic doctrine has produced with regard to the social order. And I say that, here as elsewhere, it has produced things which no other doctrine has accomplished. I say that not only has it modified, transformed natural societies, such as domestic society and political society, but that, in addition, it has created a society which is its proper work, inimitable, unimitated, which subsists for and against all, and which, for this reason, I shall call a reserved society. This will be the object of our new discourses. You will see, in the first place, what is that society reserved to the action of Catholic doctrine; you will afterwards see the influence which that reserved society, mingling with natural societies, has exercised upon their constitution and their destinies, and, in fine, how it has transformed all the elements of human society.

I do not exhort you, gentlemen, to grant me your attention; you have so long accustomed me to it. Sustained in this pulpit by Him who rends the cedars and helps the hyssop to blossom, your sympathy has been but a happy expression of His mercy towards me, and I confide myself to it as to something which comes yet more from Him than from your hearts. May He bless the inclinations which you bring into this assembly! And we, believers, servants of truth and love, may we soon be able to number from among you some more brethren!

Catholic doctrine engendering in the mind of man a certainty and knowledge superior to purely human certainty and knowledge, it inevitably follows that it should establish, between the minds of which it is the rule and the support, a society of a more perfect order than that which draws together the minds deprived of that supernatural certainty and knowledge. But that first conclusion remains much below the truth; for Catholic doctrine has not only founded a better intellectual society, it has founded the only public intellectual society to be found here below, the only true republic of minds.

I comprehend, gentlemen, that you will not permit me to proceed further without explaining my meaning; for is it not manifest that there naturally exists among men an intellectual and primitive society, without which men would be unable to understand each other, and by which, from one end of the world to the other, they comprehend their ideas by the help of discourse? This is true, gentlemen; I do not deny it; this society exists: it is the society of common-sense which unites all intelligent beings, and of which the social stock is composed of the first principles of logic and ethics, mathematical truths, and the common phenomena of nature. I do not dispute the existence of it: all men belong to it, whether they be Catholics or not: but remark one thing; that society of minds, drawn together by common-sense, is not free; it is not the produce of our voluntary activity; man is inevitably subjected to it; he merges into common-sense without any act of power or of choice, and has no other means of escape from it than by the door of madness. That door alone remains open to him against common-sense. For although God may have judged it fit to place a limit to our liberty in the fundamental principles of our reason, he has nevertheless permitted that even besides the injury which may be inflicted on the organ which

serves thought, man has power in certain cases to condemn himself to death with regard to his intellectual being. Madness, when it is not the result of a physical accident, is no other thing than a suicide of the mind—a suicide too often provoked by pride, as it is written of that famous king of Babylon who, walking upon the terraces of his palace, and seeing around him all the splendor of his capital, said within himself: “Is not this that great Babylon which I have built for myself in my power and in my glory?” And at that very instant, his pride making within him a last eruption, he fell, struck by the thunderbolt of madness. Whatever may be the intimate nature of madness, it is certain that at the epoch of an extreme liberty of thought, such as that in which we live, that terrible catastrophe of the intelligence manifests itself in cases incomparably more numerous. Like barks detached from the shore and having no pilot, upon a sea without horizon, minds wander at random, the reality vanishes before the dream, and the more feeble being no less presumptuous, many of them end by bearing the sad wreck of their ambition between the four walls of a lunatic asylum.

Excuse, gentlemen, this rapid digression. You have never commanded me to keep myself inflexibly within an inexorable square, and more than once you have granted me permission to gather under your eyes truths which caused me to wander from my path. I return to the society of minds in common-sense.

This society, then, exists; I do not dispute it; but simply because it is not an intellectual society springing from our liberty, from our own activity, its existence does not in any way contradict the proposition which I have advanced, namely, that Catholic doctrine alone has founded upon earth an intellectual public society, a society which begins precisely where common-sense ends



by necessity, and where the division becomes possible by liberty.

And, gentlemen, you will soon seize the importance of that second intellectual society, of which I attribute the exclusive honor to Catholic doctrine. For the common sense which unites us all, unites us in very narrow limits; we have not to carry our mind very far in order that it might feel itself beyond the limits of community; the *We* is limited; the *I* is infinite; and the questions upon which liberty exercises itself, are themselves without shores and bottomless. Beyond common-sense, it is no longer a question among men of certain extremities of things, but of first and final things, of the principle, the end, the function of our life, of the general system of the world, of the plans of the Creator, of the Creator Himself, of all, in a word, and of a whole, where each particle is an abyss, and where each abyss contains destiny. Do not wonder then, gentlemen, if from the most obscure antiquity, all the great men aspired to found a republic of minds. When Pythagoras, in the peace of the valleys of great Greece, invited a few disciples to silence and meditation; when Socrates prepared himself by a long course of wisdom, to drink the poison from the hands of his thoughtless country; when Plato, escorted by his hearers, walked up and down the steeps of Cape Sunium, or when he graved his thoughts in pages which could never perish; when Confucius, in the extremity of the East, lifted up a voice of which the West was to hear the echo, what did Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Confucius, those first geniuses of the profane world, if we might call it so in naming such men, what did they seek, what did they desire? What did they desire? They desired not to create empires traced out with the sword, constructions always as fragile as they are narrow; but they desired to build up the basilic of minds, to found intellectual unity, to rally the present and the future in the

profound peace of a common idea ; so that the course of man thenceforth should be like to that of a vessel which, let loose from the port by a powerful hand, sails under that sure hand, fearing no more from the ocean than from the shores. Such were their desires, such are still the desires of all who love man well enough to feel for his sufferings, and to be interested about his condition.

Yes, even in the hour in which I speak, where is the thinker, to whatever school he may belong, who, having once felt the happiness of light, having caught a glimpse of the immutable horizon upon which truth sits, has not desired to leave to his fellow-creatures these magnificent treasures, to fix the light, and make of it a full and unchangeable brightness ? Where is there in Europe a philosopher or a legislator really worthy of the name, who has not dreamed of the unity of minds, who has not regarded with trembling the soil on which we live, and who has not asked himself whether an equitable solution will not in time present itself around which all mankind may come to take rest, and to embrace each other ?

Many powers, gentlemen, have offered themselves for the accomplishment of this work. I distinguish three of them, of which all the others form but shades. The first is the power, or if you like it better, the philosophy, called rationalist.

This philosophy reasons thus : Since we possess first principles which are certain ; since, in the logical order, in the moral order, in the mathematical order, in the physical order, we have starting-points which are living ; that is to say, which contain unlimited and ulterior consequences : why should we not draw from them the whole of truth, as men draw from a mine all the gold which is hidden therein ? If the principles were not productive, if they contained only themselves and nothing beyond this, all would be declared, all hope of future conquests would be

a vain illusion. But since the contrary is manifest, why should we not think that God has given to us, in the primitive treasure of our understanding, the germ of all science and of all truth? Without doubt we need time, patience, the labor and experience of ages; but ages are not wanting to us, nor labor, nor genius; and, in fine, the day will come when the last stone will be placed, the temple entirely illuminated, and the reign of unity founded for ever. Logically, gentlemen, that is to say, consulting only the order of ideas, we do not see clearly why it should not be so. But let us look to the facts; for, you know, it is reality which decides all. Let us see, then, if the rationalist philosophy, and I understand by this the good rationalist philosophy, that which sincerely seeks to affirm and to edify, the philosophy of the great men whom I named just now; Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Confucius; let us see, I say, if they have founded an intellectual public society—the public unity of minds. And that we may be better able to discover it, let us first examine what are the conditions necessary to the existence of such a society.

Without ideas in common, there is no unity of minds, and, consequently, no intellectual society. But to hold ideas in common is not sufficient to that end; they must, in addition, be unchangeable. For if the ideas held in common are transient, unsettled, variable, the bond of minds will itself be transient, unsettled, variable; it will yield to the faintest breeze, to the first accident, and the unity will be but a superficial and deceitful union, such as is found in factions and parties. The immutability of ideas is at the same time the root and the instrument of unity.

Besides, it is necessary that the commonly received ideas should be fundamental ideas; for to establish unity of minds, upon their agreement on points of little impor-

tance, whilst they are divided on capital points, is to mock at common-sense. Now, there are no fundamental ideas but those from whence the activity of man is derived; and the ideas from whence the activity of man is derived are those which he forms upon the principle, the end, and the functions of his life. As long as man is not in agreement with man upon this triple basis, they will never unite in one and the same thought and in one and the same action, if it be not in matters which have no value, and in which their momentary alliance would be unequal to the task of forming of them one single principle.

In a word, the constitutive ideas of intellectual unity should be freely recognized and accepted by the intelligence; for if it be not the intelligence which recognizes them, and which accepts them freely, their presence in the understanding is a phenomenon foreign to the rational order, a result of violence, of blind habit, or of fatality, characters which exclude all appearance of intellectual society, among beings subjected only to the misery of one and the same oppression.

Therefore, that there may be unity of minds, there must be between them ideas which are common, unchangeable, fundamental, freely recognized and accepted by the intelligence; and that unity may constitute a public intellectual society, it is necessary in the last place, that the ideas which form its basis should not be the privilege of a few, but that all the living elements of humanity should have part in them, should be really associated in them, from the infant to the aged, from the poor to the prince, from the most ignorant to the most learned. In the contrary case, society would lose its public character, to become only a caste or a school.

And now, gentlemen, I appeal to you. Has rationalist philosophy, the most perfect and the most worthy of respect, founded a public dogma? The public dogma is

that which I defined just now, a mass of ideas which are immutable, fundamental, freely acknowledged and accepted by intelligences of all ranks. I repeat the question to you. Has rationalist philosophy anywhere founded, in any time or place whatever, a public dogma? No, no; a thousand times no. Rationalist philosophy has created schools—this is all; and what is a school? The gathering of some disciples around the opinions of a master. And what is a disciple? A man who adopts certain ideas, certain proceedings of another man, on the condition of quitting them when it pleases him, and even in the formal hope of quitting them, were it but for the legitimate pleasure of becoming master in his turn. From fifteen to twenty years of age, perhaps, the disciple is more humble and more serious. At that age when reason awakes, and when the simplicity of the heart is not yet lost, we come to hear an eloquent man; we suffer ourselves to be drawn along by the ingenious course of his language; we abandon ourselves to the current of his inspiration; we believe in him. But when the age of self-possession arrives, the age of maturity, the age in which men weigh themselves and others, then adieu to the master, adieu to obedience, adieu to that dear and noble friendship of early years, which caused our thoughts to be the thoughts of great men, or at least of those whom we generously called by that name. Aristotle will no longer swear by Plato, he will swear by himself; and he who will not have the boldness or the inclination to swear by himself, will swear by no one. At forty years old, whatever man may become, he is no longer the disciple of a man. Certainly, gentlemen, this is a great capital; it contains I believe many eminent men; well, if you ever meet with one who is the disciple of another, I conjure you to come and tell me of it. I would go to see that prodigy, which I have not as yet had occasion to admire, and I should be able to say



before leaving this world : I have seen a man who had a disciple !

Let us admit, if you will, that philosophical schools, notwithstanding the inconsistency of their doctrines, may have, temporarily, some shadow of unity, still they will not form any intellectual public society, gathering together in its bosom all the living elements of humanity ; but only a mere academy of privileged thinkers preserving, at a distance from the vulgar, the memory and the ideas of a man unknown to the throng. Rationalist philosophy does not disguise this. Recently, one of its young adepts in claiming for it, by an expression as ingenious as bold, the honor and the power of *spiritual ministration*, declared resolutely, that it was not yet capable of exercise, save with regard to cultivated minds. The rest, that is to say, when we know the world—nearly all ; the rest belong by right, and very happily so, to the more general and more maternal action of Catholic doctrine. What is an institution, gentlemen, if it be an institution, which after six thousand years of labor, since there were men who formed systems of philosophy even before the Deluge, does not fear to avow itself incapable of *spiritual ministration*, with regard to nearly the whole of mankind ?

Therefore, gentlemen, another idea has appeared and taken its place in the world ; another power has presented itself to found the republic of minds ; I shall call it autoeratic philosophy. Autoeratic philosophy proceeds as follows : The unity of minds is necessary to the human race ; besides this, there exist only contemptible associations of interests, incapable of sustaining the shock even of wants and of cupidities. As long as a people is not one in thought, it is not a people, but an assemblage of merchants, a collection of bodies, and of inordinate desires. The unity of minds is society itself, and consequently it must be created among men at any cost. Now, reasoning

and liberty disunite intelligences instead of associating them together; it is then necessary to sacrifice reasoning and liberty, and to impose intellectual unity upon nations by whatever way it may best be done. To find one of these ways is the work of the great man, *par excellence*, the work of the conqueror, of the founder, of the legislator. Such is, gentlemen, the autocratic idea; it has played, it still plays, a grand part in the world; from it came Brahminism, Mahometanism, Paganism. The Brahmins have placed under the protection of immutable castes certain ideas upon the foundations of our duties and of our activity; and they have held them during centuries under the shelter of their political and intellectual confederation. Mahomet has produced unity by the sword, without taking the trouble to hide it in a sheath. Paganism succeeded in the same work by confounding in an absolute manner civil and religious society.

Must we, gentlemen, blame the Brahmins, blame Mahomet, Minos, Lycurgus, Numa, all those celebrated legislators of antiquity? It belongs to me perhaps to do so; to me, the son of a better unity, of an unity which saves the reason and the liberty of man, whilst it founds the society of minds; and yet I comprehend the idea and the labors of those men who, in the absence of a divine light, have done what they could to create nations with ideas, the only true manner of creating them. And you, men of the present time, who have learned only how to unmake ideas and nations, I fancy you will not much advance yourselves, by according to the old edifices of autocracy some esteem and consideration.

However, gentlemen, let us not go too far by way of retaliation. Autocratic philosophy has not, any more than rationalist philosophy, set up a veritable public dogma in the world. I see in its works the immobility of ideas, but not the immutability. The one is not the

other, and by a great deal. Immobility is an immutability dead, whilst immutability is an immobility living. The one proceeds from free activity; the other from an inert and inveterate servitude. Far from being sisters, they mark the two extremities of things. God is immutable, nothingness is immovable; nothingness is incapable of producing anything, God is the supreme actor. Let us then be careful not to confound the work of the immobility of ideas with the work of their immutability. The first is the produce of a halting-point forced, inflicted upon the human intelligence, of a reason enchained by the violence and by the artifice of institutions. There is wanting to the fixed ideas which result, the free acceptance of the intelligence; they want air, and light, and movement. Draw them forth from the unworthy dungeon in which the iron hand of autocracy retains them, they will stagger at the door, and, at the first contact of discussion, they will swoon away, like those corpses which appear intact on the opening of the sepulchre, and which the slightest breath from a living mouth turns into dust, without form or trace of what it was.

Between rationalist philosophy and autocratic philosophy, both of which are powerless to produce the great work of the unity of minds, heretical philosophy takes its place as an intermediary, borrowing on the one hand from rationalism, the element of reason and liberty, and from autocracy, a supernatural or a pretended supernatural element. The attempts of that philosophy of the just medium have been numerous in the world, from Indian Buddhism, which sought to modify the originary Brahminism, to modern Protestantism, which clings to the flanks of Catholicism in order to devour it. I halt before this last example, because it is the most recent, and perhaps the most complete.

In the sixteenth century Europe existed entirely under

the empire of Catholic doctrine. A monk appeared, who found the unity which he beheld defective. It pleased him to break with it, for the purpose of reconstructing another, and leaving the living body of which he had been a member, he carried away in his hands the book of the law, the Gospel of Christ, to make of it the corner-stone of the new unity. The plan was simple. Did not the book contain ideas which were common, fundamental, immutable, freely recognized and accepted by all Europe? What difficulty should there have been found in placing them under the disinterested guardianship of reason and liberty, and of preserving all their strength for the future? Nevertheless, gentlemen, you are acquainted with the success; you know what the unity of minds has become in the hands of Luther and of his posterity. Even now, after three centuries, they are about to assemble at Berlin; they assembled yesterday in Paris, the day before in London, to seek, in the most frightful confusion which has ever been beheld, the philosopher's stone of unity.

Triple and terrible trial! Neither with pure reason, nor with autocracy, nor with the half-measure of heresy, has any one touched the goal. Therefore, gentlemen, despair has begun to be felt, and we have heard in our age intelligent men, weary of all unity, proclaiming their situation in a phrase which is as candid as energetic: *The division of opinions is our greatest good.* Yes; to be to self alone, and to self all alone, its principle of intellectual activity, to think for self and by self, to overturn in the evening the idea of the morning, to live without master and without disciples, without past and without future. Yes; there is our strength, our glory, our life. Away with whoever desires to constitute a society of minds! All unity is a bond, every bond is a burden, every burden is a form of servitude, all servitude is the height of opprobrium and misery: *The division of opinions is our great-*



*est good.* You know this language, gentlemen; it was your cradle; it is still, perhaps, your daily aliment. If it be so, rejoice in the condition which it has produced for you. Rejoice in unity lost, in the pleasure of beginning and ending in yourselves, in the happiness of laughing at your fathers, and of being mocked at by your children, at having nothing in common but doubt and anarchy, in perspective but the improvement of that sublime state. Enjoy your condition, gentlemen, but nevertheless take care, you have an enemy. Whilst you are abandoning yourselves to the joy and to the security of your civilization, autocracy, that immortal minotaur which stretches out its hideous and attentive head at the door of communities—autocracy keeps watch upon you; with a greedy eye it marks the progress of your felicity, and the hour come when you will no longer be anything but material bodies—that autocracy will lay hold of the Cossack's scourge, and will drive before it those pulverized minds who will have consumed their last atom of cement, and who, incapable of resisting the first military unity got together by a fortunate captain, will yield up their pride to all the ignominies of unlimited obedience, and their intelligence to all the brutalities of a dogma born in the *ateliers* of the police, or in the saturnalia of a camp of prætorian guards.

Is there then no power, no doctrine which is sufficiently divine and sufficiently human to found the society of minds without sacrificing the liberty of reason and the rights of liberty? Is there in the world no public dogma freely recognized and accepted by the poor, the rich, the ignorant, the sage, and the *savant*? Ah! listen! I hear from far and near, from the centre of these walls, from the depths of ages and of generations; I hear voices which form but one—the voice of infants, of virgins, of young men, of the aged, of artists, of poets, of philosophers;



the voice of princes and of nations ; the voice of time and space ; the deep and musical voice of unity ! I hear it ! It chants the canticle of the only society of minds which is found here below ; it repeats, without ever having ceased, that declaration, the only one to be found which is stable and consolatory : *Credo in unam Sanctam, Catholicam, Apostolicam Ecclesiam*. And I, the son of that spotless and boundless unity—I sing with all the others, and I repeat to you : *Credo in unam Sanctam, Catholicam, Apostolicam Ecclesiam*. Ah ! yes, I believe in her !

Let us collect these things, gentlemen, and see if Catholic doctrine has in reality founded upon earth the public unity of minds ; for you must not, from lassitude, fall into hands which deceive you, which are strong to promise but weak to perform.

Has Catholic doctrine, more fortunate than rationalism, autoocracy, and heresy, set up in the world immutable fundamental ideas, which are freely accepted and recognized by men of all conditions and of all ranks ? This is the question. I have stripped the work of rationalist philosophy, of autocratic philosophy, and of heretical philosophy, of these characters, and, you are my witnesses, I have done so without gall or bitterness, by giving you proofs palpable for any one who has studied history for twenty-four hours. Now I deny no longer, I affirm ; the position is no longer the same ; for it is easy to deny, and difficult to affirm. Watch me then narrowly, and allow nothing to escape you.

I affirm, in the first place, that Catholic doctrine has founded immutable ideas ; that is to say, and it is a marvel, ideas which, notwithstanding the mobility of time, notwithstanding the instability of the human mind, have always existed, and in which a root of perseverance and immortality is felt—a root as enduring as it is fruitful, so

that the diamond, which is the hardest of all things, represents to us these immutable ideas which Catholic doctrine has founded, without their stubborn hardness, excluding their growth and their blooming in the world. Is this true? Is it true that immutability, without which the unity of minds is but a chimera, is a gift or an effect of Catholic doctrine? What, during eighteen hundred years, all the doctors and all the faithful Catholics, so many men with such diversified faculties, birth, passions, national prejudices, all those bishops, all those popes, all those councils, all those books, all those millions of men and of writings—what! all have thought and have declared the same things, and always! Is this possible? What then do they think, what then do they say? Hearken! they say that there is one God in three persons, who has made the heavens and the earth; that man has offended the law of creation; that he is fallen and corrupt even to the marrow of his bones; that God, having taken pity upon that corruption, has sent the second Person of Himself upon earth; that that Person became man, lived among us, died upon a cross; that by the blood of that cross voluntarily offered in sacrifice, the God-man has saved us; that He established a church to which He confided, with His word, sacraments which are a source of light, of purity, and of charity, where all men may imbibe life; that whoever drinks thereof will live eternally, and that whoever withdraws himself from it, by rejecting the Church and Christ, will perish eternally. This is the Catholic doctrine, that which is declared to-day as yesterday, in the north and in the south, in the east and in the west, by its popes, its bishops, its doctors, its priests, its faithful followers, its neophytes; ideas which are fundamental as well as immutable, because they decide upon all the active direction of the intelligences which make profession of them. Find me now an eclipse to that im-

mutability; find me a single Catholic page in which that dogma is denied altogether or in part; find me a man who, having swerved from it, has not been at that moment driven from the Church; were he the most eloquent of writers like Tertullian, or the most exalted of bishops like Nestorius, or the most powerful of emperors like Constantius and Valens; find me a man whom the purple, or genius, or sanctity may have served against the anathemas of the Church, whenever he has once touched by heresy the seamless robe of Christ.

Assuredly, the desire has not been wanting to lay hold of us, or to put us to fault against immutability: for, what a weighty privilege to all those who do not possess it; a doctrine immutable, when everything upon earth changes!—a doctrine which men hold in their hands, which poor old men, in a place called Vatican, guard under the key of their cabinet, and which, without any other defence, resists the course of time, the dreams of sages, the designs of kings, the fall of empires, always one, constant, identical with itself! What a prodigy to deny! What an accusation to silence! Therefore, all ages, jealous of a glory which disdained their own, have tried their strength against it. They have come one after the other to the door of the Vatican, they have knocked there with buskin and boot; and the doctrine has appeared under the frail and wasted form of some old man of threescore years and ten; it has said:

What do you desire of me? Change, I never change. But everything is changed in this world; astronomy has changed, chemistry has changed, philosophy has changed, the empire has changed: Why are you always the same? Because I come from God, and because God is always the same. But know that we are the masters, we have a million of men under arms, we shall draw the sword; the sword which breaks down thrones is well able to cut off the

head of an old man, and tear up the leaves of a book. Do so; blood is the aroma in which I recover my youthful vigor. Well, then, here is the half of my purple, make a sacrifice to peace, and let us share together. Keep thy purple, O Cæsar, to-morrow they will bury thee in it, and we will chant over thee the *Alleluja* and the *De Profundis* which never change.

I appeal to your memory, gentlemen, are not these facts? Even now, after so many fruitless endeavors to obtain from us the mutilation of the public dogma which forms our unity, what is said to us? What do all the publications, spiritual and otherwise, which are printed in Europe, incessantly reproach us with? Will you then never change, race of granite? Will you never make any concessions to unity and peace? Can you not sacrifice something to us; the eternal duration of punishment, for instance; the sacrament of the Eucharist; the divinity of Jesus Christ? Or even the papacy, only the papacy? Gild at least the end of the gibbet which you call a cross! They speak thus. The cross looks down upon them, it smiles, it weeps, it waits for them: *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis*. How should we change? Immutability is the sacred root of unity; it is our crown, the fact impossible to explain, impossible to destroy; the pearl which must be bought at any price, without which everything is but shadow and of transient duration, by which time touches eternity. Neither life nor death will take it from my hands: empires of this world, do with it as ye will! *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis*.

Let us not yet be so proud, gentlemen; there remains a difficulty. Oh yes, say they, you are immutable, but you are so by an autocratic immutability, by an immutability after the manner of the Brahmins, the Mahometans, the Pagans; you have, indeed, much to be proud of. The Brahmin also is immutable, the Mahometan the same, and



the Pagan was so. What have you more than they? What we have more than they is, that we accept freely, by an act of intelligence, the public dogma which constitutes our unity. We are not the children of violence, of fear, nor of any kind of servitude. See, in the first place, how we were born. If my memory serves me well, we were not born under that stool which men call a throne; we did not open our eyes one day under the robe of the Prætorians at the foot of the Palatine. We were, indeed, under the Palatine, but under its caves, in the catacombs. We were there, tracked like wild beasts from one end of the world to the other; and see how we make proselytes to our faith. A man came from I know not where, who spake strange things; he entered into a great city, walked into a shop, sat down whilst some one mended his sandals, and as the workman labored at that lowly work, the stranger opened his mouth; he announced to the artisan that a God was come to bear to the earth a doctrine of voluntary suffering and crucifixion—a doctrine which humbled pride and scourged the senses. “Comrade,” said he to him, “leave thy tools, come with us; we have the Cæsars against us, they kill us by thousands, but we have holes under the earth where thou wilt find a bed, an altar, and a tomb. We sleep there, we pray there, we sing there, we die there, and then we are placed between three tiles in the rock, waiting for the day of resurrection, when our remains will appear in honor and in glory. Comrade, descend with us into the catacombs, come and learn how to live and how to die!” The artisan rose up, he went down into the catacombs, and he never more left them, for he had found, underground, light and love.

Was this a conquest obtained by the means of autocracy? Ah! when after three centuries of tortures, from the top of *Monte Mario*, Constantine saw the *Labarum*



in the air ; it was the blood of Christians which had caused it to bud forth in the shade, which ascended like dew even to heaven, and which spread itself out there under the form of the cross triumphant. Our public liberty was the fruit of a moral liberty without example. Our entry into the *forum* of princes was the fruit of an empire, which we had exercised upon ourselves even to death. Men were able to reign after such an apprenticeship to order ; they could well cover doctrine with purple, after all the blood which had been shed upon it. The reign was not long, moreover, supposing that that time which elapsed between Constantine and the barbarians might be called by that name, a time so full of combats, during which Catholic doctrine never quitted for a single day the pen and the word. The barbarians then came, and with them a new society to convert. Was it accomplished by means of autocracy ? Saint Remy doubtless said to Clovis : “ Bow down thy head ! ” But which was the lamb—the bishop or the warrior ? Which was the lamb—Clotilde or Clovis ?

It is true, in the middle ages, Catholic doctrine appeared to clothe itself in the outward signs of autocracy. I say in the outward signs, for it had passed through its trials ; it might think it had the right to protect spiritual unity by the help of civil unity, and, in addition, it never ceased to write and to speak, and to have powerful enemies, even under the crown of the empire. Saint Anselm, Saint Thomas, Saint Bonaventure, then explained and defended the public dogma of Catholicity. There was then no conspiracy for extending the light, and destroying the liberty of moral choice. Moreover, this second reign, more complete than the first, was short also ; the sixteenth century arose very soon, and after it the eighteenth. You know the rest ; all the earth leagued together against the liberty of Catholic doctrine ; its goods spoiled ; its

priests mutilated; its civil authority destroyed everywhere; a deadly war which letters, science, and the arts, have declared against it. And, notwithstanding, it lives, it is sustained, it gains souls, it maintains the immutability of its public dogma, with the same heart, and with the same success. I say its public dogma, for already, you have remarked it, it is not the portion of a single class of men; it calls together all the living elements of humanity. The faith of the poor is the same as the faith of the learned. All believe in and pray to the same God, with the same obligation of humbling their pride, and knowing their nothingness. Science and ignorance become, in the common light, imperceptible shadows, which color unity without corrupting it, and which render more sensible its unalterable splendor.

I recapitulate what I have said, gentlemen; there is no veritable society but the society of minds, and that society is only constituted by ideas which are held in common, which are fundamental, immutable, freely recognized and accepted by men of all ranks. Man, pressed by the need of this unity of minds, has tried many ways to establish it. He has, with this end in view, created the rationalist philosophy, the autocratic philosophy, and the heretical philosophy—three attempts founded on different plans of action, all three filling the world with their efforts, all three powerless to organize in it the republic of minds. Catholic doctrine alone has been able to do this. Why? What is the cause of its success? What is it which has enabled it to succeed where all other doctrines have failed? We must explain this to you, gentlemen, and it will be necessary to draw conclusions from all that you have just heard, conclusions which you doubtless desire, and which will be but the stronger by your having the patience not to require them to-day.

## THIRTIETH CONFERENCE.

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WHY CATHOLIC DOCTRINE ALONE HAS FOUNDED A PUBLIC  
INTELLECTUAL SOCIETY.

MY LORD,<sup>1</sup>

GENTLEMEN,

THAT division of opinions upon the earth, the unheard of efforts of men to destroy unity, whilst no other doctrine than Catholic doctrine has been able to succeed in the work of forming unity, is doubtless a marvellous spectacle. From that alone, and without proceeding further, we should have the right to conclude that Catholic doctrine possesses a superhuman power, since it has accomplished that which no other doctrine has reached the point of realizing. Assuredly, nothing has been wanting to these doctrines, neither genius, nor science, nor public influence, nor the prestige of so many things which crowd under man to lift him above himself, as we see fragile craft upon the ocean raised up by the waves which make it a duty to obey us, and to bear us along nobly and speedily. From whence comes it, then, that they have not succeeded with all the human means which impart success? And how is it that Catholic doctrine has succeeded, although for a long time and on divers occasions, it has been combated by all these means united together? Shall we not find that it is because Catholic doctrine has resources which no other doc-

<sup>1</sup> Monseigneur Affre, archbishop of Paris.

trine possesses, and the other doctrines having in their power everything which is human, that Catholic doctrine has in its power something which is not human, something which comes not from below, but which falls from on high? The conclusion is manifest.

However, to halt there would be to halt on the surface of truth. When we have foundations under us which excite the curiosity of the observer, it is to be wanting in duty to science to pass them by with a mere glance. Let us dig, gentlemen, let us dig under the rock of Catholic unity; the exterior edifice has astonished us by its height and its peculiar singularity; it rose up before us like an unique pyramid upon the shifting sands of the world; but I imagine that by descending to its foundation, by removing the dust in which its root lies buried, a still more magnificent spectacle will be presented to you—a light which will gush forth from the base and rise to the summit, which, in satisfying your intelligence, will be worthy also of rewarding your attention.

With this hope I shall commence.

The first explanation of the Catholic privilege of unity, that which at first presents itself as very simple and very plausible, is this: Catholic doctrine alone has founded the public unity of minds, because Catholic doctrine alone possesses truth. Truth being the good of the intelligence it is natural that its empire should be great, and that its appearance in the midst of our battles of thought should produce the effect of a sovereign who presents himself, causes us to halt, makes us submissive, calms us and blends us all together in one single spirit.

This explanation appears as simple as it is forcible, and yet it is not without some difficulty. In the first place, it is not exact to say that Catholic doctrine alone possesses truth, or in other words, a reasonable accumulation of ideas upon the principle, the end, and the function of life. Might

not Deism, as it would now easily be described, claim that advantage? Deism affirms that there exists an unique God, whose power, wisdom, and goodness are infinite, who has made the world, and man in particular: that man, at the same time soul and body, belongs by the one to the exterior world, by the other to a higher world, which is the spiritual world; that if his body perish, his soul is not subject to destruction, but that, being destined to immortality, it will be judged by God according to its works, because those works are performed in virtue of a moral liberty which renders it responsible before the tribunal of supreme justice; and that in this way a time will come when God, after having governed free beings with a just providence, will reward or punish them with perfect impartiality. Certainly, gentlemen, this doctrine is grand as well as true, and Catholics have honored it even by sometimes calling it, at least in the last century, by the name of *natural religion*. And yet, of all Rationalist doctrines, this is perhaps the one which, historically, possesses the least consistency and vitality.

Deism, even since the Gospel, which has so much enlightened and strengthened the notions of it, is a system which has never formed a philosophical or religious body. The eighteenth century, hoping to substitute it in the place of Catholic doctrine, petted, adorned, and beautified it like a favored child; and now, notwithstanding all the applause which surrounded its cradle, Deism is so completely dead that it no longer counts among its servants a single man of distinction. There are Pantheists, St. Simonians, Fourierists, and others; but Deists! who would touch that dry bone which the last century left to us as the best part of its heritage? Removed from the masters of science and the existing schools, a few honest citizens still affirm the existence of the unique Being, the rewarder and punisher—a species of consolation in which they



cradle their conscience, so as not to be too much afraid of hell for themselves, without entirely destroying it for others ; a kind of couch accommodated to the measure of their virtue ; an elastic and weak spring of action, which unites no two persons together, and which leaves weighing upon Deism that accusation of Bossuet, "that it is but disguised Atheism."

Secondly, if Catholic doctrine alone possessed a body of truths, and all the others contained only an organization of errors, this would not explain its success with regard to unity. For although man may have been created for truth, which is his highest good, he does not possess an undivided love for it ; he also loves illusion, and if it be necessary to decide which is the stronger of these two attractions, I do not think that error would have the disadvantage in the comparison. Truth is acquired by many combats, error costs us nothing ; we fall into it of our own weight, and it is just as easy to form with it sudden aggregations of minds as it is difficult to form real unity with the other. It is not then in any case to resolve the question, to leave it to the innate power of truth. Truth is the occasion of contest, the object which divides as much as it unites.

It will, perhaps, be said, that if truth taken in itself does not sufficiently explain the mystery of unity, it explains that mystery by one of its attributes, which is light ; light, not more striking in the Catholic dogma than in any other accumulation of conceptions. Who does not see in a moment that that remark leads to a false conclusion ? For Catholic doctrine, far from having an apparent light more brilliant than any other, is, on the contrary, burdensome to the eye of man by its mysterious obscurity, by a strange depth, which severs at the first stroke the natural thread of our intelligence, as if it desired to discourage our minds by boldness rather than to attract them

by lucidity. What a very different and simple physiognomy is there in Deism! What a magical combination of necessary dogmas, in which nothing revolts, and which appears to confound itself with common-sense, so much does their clearness produce conviction in their favor! Without doubt, Catholic doctrine, regarding it by its exterior effects and by its operations in the world, creates in it great lustre; but it is a reflected lustre, a light which is not in the centre, and which, notwithstanding its evident splendor, has also its shadows and its difficulties. I grant also that there exists a latent light even in the very seat of the dogma, which is endowed with an admirable efficacy upon the mind, as soon as it enters there; but it penetrates there but slowly, and much more by the exercise of virtue than by the effort of the mind; and that sublime view of the mystery does not lift up the veil which also covers its uneven proportions.

I presume that another idea has occurred to you. Catholic doctrine, say you, engenders the public unity of minds because it alone acts by means of authority, whilst all the others proceed from free inquiry; and free inquiry produces division as naturally as authority produces unity.

Gentlemen, I see but one fault in this explanation: it is, that the point from which it starts is absolutely false. All doctrine, without a single exception, acts by means of authority. Let us leave theories, gentlemen; theories are excellent things upon paper; but when we come to practice, we are governed by inevitable necessities. Every man who acts, wills to act, and by the single fact of his desiring to act, whatever he may say or whatever he may desire, he employs the means, without which his action would be impossible and senseless. Now, all doctrine is communicated by language, that is to say, by teaching; and teaching supposes the authority of that which teaches—the authority of age, of knowledge, of eloquence, the

authority of faith and of affirmation, the authority of conquest, an authority of such a nature that no one exposes himself to it without peril. Where is the doctrine speaking loudest in favor of free inquiry, which does not present itself as pure and unique truth, which is even able to show itself without the sovereign name of truth? Where is the philosopher, even the most sceptical in the world, who does not command from his chair or pulpit? Where is the captain of a regiment of ideas who does not plant himself proudly before his battalion, and order it to file to the right or to the left? Thanks to the age in which we live, we have all heard the language of philosophers, and even of more than one kind of philosophers; are they then so little dogmatic? Do not the most modest among them declare solemnly that even yesterday truth did not exist, but that it commences from the moment in which they speak, and not a quarter of an hour sooner? that it comes down from heaven, that it is seen, and that men must be dreadfully blind not to perceive that it is in their wooden pulpit? Was it in the schools of theology that that ancient and celebrated expression, *Magister dixit*, was first uttered? And if we pass from Rationalism to Protestantism, which is the heresy most puffed up with the pride of private judgment, shall we find Luther and Calvin more moderate in affirmation? Calvin, who burned alive those who contradicted him; Luther, who threatened his adherents with transubstantiating his opinions whenever it pleased him, and that he would on every occasion make sacred dogmas of them?

Let us notice what is taking place at this moment in Germany. Whither are their envoys bound? Why are there so many horsemen on the high roads? What is it all about? Berlin is troubled about the dissolution of minds in the ever-enlarging void of Protestantism; it convokes in haste the great powers which have re-

mained faithful to the reform of the sixteenth century, fearing that to-morrow it may be too late; it opens a council to all the voices which swear by private judgment. For what purpose, alas! for what purpose? To gather together, if it be possible, the remains of the common faith, in order to place them, if it be also possible, under the protection of some concordat, and so to create authority with independence, granite with dust, unity with solemn disunion! So it is: all doctrine is appended to authority, even in denying it; for every doctrine teaches, and all teaching is an order given in the name of truth. Doubtless, the scholar is free to obey or to disobey, since he is an intelligent being; but that liberty is not the privilege of any doctrine; all have the benefit and the danger of it, when they really teach, and above all Catholic doctrine, which being always attacked, has the glory of drawing children to itself from the ever-fruitful bosom of its enemies.

But even were it true that Catholic doctrine alone acts by authority, what would result for the explanation of the unity which it produces? Do you not perceive that the assumption of authority is an additional peril for its supremacy? It is authority itself which is revolting to man. We say to him: Come to us; we have an unique chief, the Pope, who governs the whole Church of God. He answers: That is precisely what I will not accept. I will not have a man for my Pope; I am my own Pope. What is the wisdom of the Vatican to me?

The mystery continues, gentlemen; we have not explained it. Whatever may be the charm of truth, it has in opposition to it the charm of error; however abundant light may be, there remain sufficient clouds to obscure it; whatever authority may be, all possess an authority, all possess a liberty, which governs truth, which governs light, which governs authority. How then is that public unity



of minds founded, and how does it subsist, that free unity, every leaf of which, every branch, every stem, may at each moment detach itself? For they are not only certain souls which escape from the ascendancy of Catholic doctrine, it loses nations also. England was Catholic; she is so no longer: Denmark and Sweden were Catholic; they are so no longer: the East was Catholic; it is so no longer. The history of unity is furrowed with defections, which exhibit it as suspended over an abyss, and which declares to us all, however firm we may be, that we may perish in our turn. What a spectacle! How forcibly should it strike terror into all those who have any active part in this mystery, whether they hold it from rank or from talent! But how much, also, should it alarm those who detract from it by refusing to enter into its ranks! See before you a hundred and fifty millions of men, united by intelligence, and free to be otherwise, having full power at each moment to burst the bonds of their unity, and not bursting them: what retains them? How is so wonderful a miracle of immutability accomplished, in the midst of universal division, notwithstanding the change of things and the succession of men? It can only be explained, gentlemen, by the existence of two powers which contend for the world—the schismatic force and the power of unity. It is not enough simply to name them, I must describe their nature to you, and by this means succeed in enlightening you on that great privilege of unity which is reserved to Catholic doctrine.

The first element of the schismatic force is the luminous essence of our intelligence. Our intelligence is light, and has no relations but with light. Whenever you present light to it, it will fly straight towards that light, as the eyes open to the rays of day, and become saturated with their brightness. Naturally, and of its own accord, the intelligence seeks only light, knows only light, reposes



only in light. Now, no doctrine here below possesses total light, not even Catholic doctrine. In vain would Catholic doctrine flatter itself that it possessed it, and it has never so flattered itself. Yes, all doctrine imparts to the intelligence of man only a very feeble amount of light, incapable of satisfying it. If it were otherwise, man would not live in the world—he would live even in the splendor of God; he would be plunged into that infinite horizon where obscurity has no place, where every intelligence, when brought before it, prostrates itself, never to rise again, and begins to sing the hymn which is reserved to spirits of light in the light of God. This, indeed, is our future, if we merit it; but it is by no means our present state.

Even in the time when we dwelt with our fathers in the paradise of our creation, when we were yet young, under the canopy of heaven in which no anger was to be seen, and when God descended to talk with us as with friends, even then, in the spring-time of our soul and of our felicity, our abode was not yet in light, nor was vision our privilege. However near God was to us, it was a God veiled from us, we beheld Him, to use an expression from Scripture, through the cleft of a rock, and we saw but the edge of His mantle, a vision at the same time cruel and cheering! for it is not our destiny to foresee light, but directly to behold it—to behold it without shadow, without limit, full, entire, absolute—to behold it as it is, with a regard which causes no palpitation in the glance, because it is enraptured. Judge now, if, at this hour in which we live, any doctrine be capable of imparting to us this regard, the only one which will exhaust the aspiration of our soul towards truth. What doctor will promise this to us? Which of them will dare to tell us, however blinded he may be by the resources of pride or of persuasion, that he, his teaching, his thought, is light, and that every knee should bend before it, adore it unceasingly, as the seraphim adore in heaven? Ah!

never, gentlemen, has the insolence of genius reached that point; never has it been able to conceal from any intelligent being that an abyss—a profound abyss—an abyss of darkness, is open over our heads, under our feet, at our right hand, on our left, on the east, the west, the north, and the south—on every side. Yes, we dwell in darkness, darkness unclouded here and there by rays of light dealt out with a miserly hand, into which our eye plunges with a bitter and an immense regret that it cannot see beyond.

And see with what doctrines we subjugate you! See what we bring to you, to you, legitimate children of light, stars of heaven, more brilliant than the firmament in the most splendid of summer nights! We bring to you I know not what flambeau, from which we shed upon you trembling glimmers. They are, without doubt, certain, they are undeniable; but what a door is open to the resistances of the intelligence! what facility for disobeying! and also, even thereby, what value does it impart to obedience and unity, when they become victorious!

The second element of the schismatic force is the affection of the intelligence for darkness. Wonderful to say! We are created for light, we love only light, we are only captivated by light; and yet, by another side of our being, by a vile and ignominious side, we take delight in darkness and unheedingly accumulate it around us. This is because total light being refused to us from on high, we seek here below, in the nearest horizon to physical nature, a complete order which might satisfy our intelligence, without exhibiting to it that mixture of light and shadow which is vexatious to us. We think, by diminishing the spectacle, to enlarge our vision; we sacrifice the infinite in the hope of being able to see the finite more easily; it is still light which we seek in darkness. There is, however, another and a less honorable cause of that tendency of the human

understanding, and the Scripture has revealed it to us in those memorable words: "*The light is come into the world; and men have loved darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil.*"<sup>1</sup> There exists, in fact, between truth and duty, between the metaphysical order and the moral order, a connection which causes the questions of the intelligence to be also questions of the heart. Each discovery made of God menaces us with a virtue, with a sacrifice of pride or of the senses; our weakness and the passions come to the help of error, and impose a terrible weight in the struggle of intelligent beings—a struggle which is become that of good and evil. It is here, above all, where the schismatic force takes its point of support.

It finds a third in intellectual egotism, that is to say, in a certain individuality of the mind which is common to each of us. It is true, gentlemen, that we have all something in common in the form of our intelligence as well as in the form of our body; yet that uniformity does not exclude the differences of physiognomy. No mind, any more than any face, perfectly resembles another; we think and we feel differently, and by a very natural egotism, each of us draws to himself the whole firmament of ideas, in order to fashion it according to his measure, and to blend it in his own personality. From thence arises a puerile attachment to our senses, a persuasion that our mind is the competent and supreme judge of truth, and an ingenuous repose in ourselves, when we have said of an idea: That does not enter at all into my mind. Ah! What does it signify? The question is to know whether it be a misfortune for the idea or for you. But we willingly believe that that reason of refusal is an undeniable condemnation, and nothing appears more simple to us than to limit the infinite by our horizon. We would even

<sup>1</sup> St. John, ch. 3, v. 19.

impose upon others our spiritual individuality, and we seize with avidity the first power which servants or subjects give to us to make of them the slaves and the worshippers of our ideas. We are surprised that any resist us ; and we sometimes conceive a deadly hatred for a man who has not thought like ourselves on only one occasion ; so that the sign *par excellence* of a great mind is modesty, disinterestedness with regard to his own ideas, distrust of himself. But this is not arrived at without the long apprenticeship of a virtue ripened by unity, and up to that point intellectual egotism excites us to transform truth in ourselves instead of transforming ourselves in truth.

This third element of the schismatic force is followed by another, which is the last, but not the least ; I mean the arbitrary omnipotence of the mind. Independently of its inclination for light, of its being carried away towards darkness, of its narrow egotism—all of which are causes which bear it towards separation—the mind is free ; it is free against error, free against truth, it can perform whatever it pleases.

Judge, gentlemen, if such be the schismatic force, what ought the power of unity to be : for its existence is absolutely necessary, since there exists in the world a public society of minds. Suppose that no power of unity counterbalances the schismatic force ; intelligent beings deprived of all ties, borne each wherever the wind of hazard may drive them, would meet together but to clash against each other, and form at most a few casual aggregations, like those clouds which sail along in the heavens without ever being able to find there a day of rest. Thus, to use a comparison which it has been easy for you to anticipate, take away from the celestial mechanism the power which Newton has consecrated under the name of attraction, at that very moment, the globes which people ether would fly away in opposite directions, precipitated in their course



by that other power which is the schismatic force of the material world. So, again, take away from a nation the power which keeps in peace the passions and the interests of so many millions of men, and you would see it fall to pieces in the frenzies of parricidal warfare. It stands in absolute need of a principle of unity superior to the elements of discord which it nourishes in its own bosom ; and that principle has a name—it is sovereignty. Sovereignty is superiority *par excellence*, and superiority *par excellence* is that which contains and which produces unity. The sovereign is the being which makes unity. In a monarchy it is the prince ; in an aristocracy it is the senate ; in a democracy it is the assembly of the people. But under whatever form it may be, wherever the power exists which makes unity, there is the sovereign. We will suppose ourselves on a field of battle ; a hundred thousand men are ranged there, and yet all are motionless, everything is silent, the horses, the clarions, the dust : What is happening ? Unity is in silence and suspended ; it watches, it waits, it reigns. Then a word falls from its lips ; the bronze thunders, the horses neigh, the arms clash, the squadrons annihilate space : unity still reigns, it is unity which produced order in immobility, it is unity also which produces it in action. Unity was silent, unity spake, unity was sovereign in both cases : this is all the history of a battle, and all the history of order, in all times and places.

Since then order exists somewhere in the world of ideas, since—notwithstanding the frightful fermentations of discord which disturb and divide it—a public society of minds has succeeded in founding itself, it is then true that there exists also an intellectual sovereignty, a sovereignty of which Catholic doctrine alone is in possession, since alone it has triumphed over the schismatic force which keeps intelligent beings in hostility and in dissolution.



Just as there is no civil society without a civil government, nor any civil government without a civil sovereignty, so there no more exists any society of minds without a government of minds, neither any government of minds without an intellectual sovereignty—a sovereignty which no more destroys the liberty of the intelligence than the civil sovereignty destroys civil liberty, but which, on the contrary, establishes it, by delivering souls from the disorderly yoke of the schismatic force. This is that intellectual sovereignty which all the authors of schisms have sought, and which they still seek, together with all those who aspire, either from ambition or from love of mankind, to found the public unity of minds. When a philosopher ascends his rostrum, he simply makes a throne of it for himself; he places himself as a sovereign; he seeks in his science and in his genius for the secret of that superiority *par excellence* which produces unity; and he is right in so doing, up to the point when, alarmed at his powerlessness, he recognizes and adores the hand by which all kings reign, and which, having given the empire of the earth to conquerors, has refused to sages and philosophers the empire of truth, to give it to Jesus Christ, and by Jesus Christ to the Catholic Church.

Let us advance still further, gentlemen, and endeavor to find in what intellectual sovereignty consists; for, as long as we do not know this, something will be wanting to the evidence of our deductions.

Intellectual sovereignty can only reside in the ideas or in the mind. It is impossible to place it elsewhere; for all that which is intellectual is either idea or mind, the object of thought or the subject thinking. Now, intellectual sovereignty does not reside in the object or in the idea; the idea is not living independently of the mind which receives it, it is capable of change by entering there, may lose its rectitude and its force, and not emerge therefrom

to pass into another mind, without a cold and fruitless energy, like an arrow weakly thrown by an archer without vigor.

You have before you illustrious examples of this. The Greek Church has all the ideas of the Catholic Church, or very nearly, and yet the Greek Church exists inanimately, possessing no more unity than that of a corpse bound round with bands by the cruel hands of the Russian autocracy. The Bible also contains Catholic ideas, and Protestants have lighted upon them in the hope of deriving life, unity, and intellectual sovereignty from them; have they succeeded in accomplishing this? Much less than the Greeks; immobility has preserved to these some appearance of a body; action has reduced those to the consistency of a heap of ashes. What is then the virtue of ideas beyond the mind, in which they take their form, their power, their immortality? But what is the mind itself, that the intellectual sovereignty should have in it its throne and its action? What are the minds of which the Catholic Church is composed? Alas! they are men: you, myself, the first child who, on leaving this assembly, will go to confess his sins. Is it then our intelligence, taken singly or in common, which possesses intellectual sovereignty, that formidable sovereignty which, during eighteen centuries, in spite of all the schismatic force of which the world disposes, captivates a hundred and fifty millions of men around one and the same dogma? And around what dogma? Around a dogma which does not satisfy their innate thirst for light, which irritates their passion for darkness, which wounds their spiritual individuality to the quick, and demands from their free-will a humiliating acceptance. What! you and I, all of us together, a thousand men, a hundred thousand men, are capable by their own minds of such an act of sovereignty? Do not believe a word of it; beware of believing it; it

is not possible. As men, we possess nothing more than the philosophers and the *savants*, who have been able to do nothing and who have done nothing, because radically all minds are equal, because no mind is the sovereign of another mind.

Will you return to ideas? Will you conclude that intellectual sovereignty resides in ideas, and that the world is subject to us by their energy! But why do not ideas become corrupted in our intelligence, as they became corrupted in the intelligence of the Greeks and the Protestants? Who or what, then, has given them another character with us? Why are they so vain elsewhere, why so powerful in the Church? You see clearly that the circle is closed, and that logic leaves no haven open to us!

Yet Catholic unity exists; it exists alone in the world; it supposes a power of unity, an intellectual sovereignty. Who has imparted this to us, since ideas do not impart it, and the mind of man does not possess it? Evidently another mind than our own is within us, another power animates us, another spirit protects us, another spirit speaks to us—the spirit which departed from man at Babel, and which returned on the day of Pentecost: the spirit of God! The world is Babel, the Church is Pentecost. If God be not in the Church, it may be some other thing, but very certainly it is not man.

I have pursued, gentlemen, the analysis of the causes which explain the mystery of Catholic unity to the extreme point. I shall tarry yet for a moment, to say a last word of Rationalism.

Rationalism often reproaches us with being wanting in justice with regard to itself. It appears to think that we contest the entire domain of truth with it, as if it were incapable of ever disclosing a single true idea; we do not go so far. But, however it may be on this point, the

question between Rationalism and ourselves is also a question of sovereignty. We say to Rationalism, that even if it possessed entire truth, had it even, if it were possible, more truth than the Church possesses, it would not rally minds into any stable unity, such as is necessary to the existence of mankind; because the most sincere and the most religious Rationalism is but an effort of man in favor of man, an attempt at sovereignty which is destined always to be shattered in pieces against the immense schismatic force which is unfortunately in activity in the moral world. We do not even claim for ourselves, as men, that sovereignty which, during six thousand years, has escaped from the hands of Rationalism; we know that no mind is the sovereign of another mind. We profess that it is impossible even for Socrates and Plato to make a single disciple for themselves, and for a stronger reason, a single subject. The unity of the Church is for us a divine phenomenon, which is only to be explained by the perpetual presence of the spirit of God in the midst of us. We believe that God has reserved the intellectual sovereignty to Himself, and that every attempt to obtain it will invariably end either in the enslaving of souls by autocracy, or in their ruin by doubt and negation. These two proofs, indeed, are necessary to the glorification of Catholic unity, so that, assailed always by imitators armed with science or with the sword, the Church may pass through the midst of their designs without failing to fulfil her destiny, ever virgin, ever mother, ever queen, and seeing to vanish in smoke the hopes of a rivalry which pursues her always only to become her perpetual crown.

## THIRTY-FIRST CONFERENCE.

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OF THE ORGANIZATION AND EXPANSION OF CATHOLIC  
SOCIETY.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

It is doubtless a great thing to have created in the world an intellectual public society, to have established in it ideas which are immutable, fundamental, freely recognized and accepted by intelligent beings of all ranks. Catholic doctrine has accomplished this, and no other doctrine has since accomplished it. But however remarkable this work may be, and although it can only be attributed to the spirit of God—so much is the mind of man feeble and incapable of such a work—yet this by no means forms the limit of the social action reserved to Catholic doctrine. The society which it has created does not assume the abstract name which we have employed up to the present time, it does not assume the name of a public intellectual society; its name is more grave, more significant, more difficult to bear, more celebrated, in a word, and you have already anticipated me, gentlemen, in calling it the Church, or Catholic society. Yes, this is its name: and that name supposes first that it does not refer to a purely intellectual society, but to an organic society, in which doctrinal unity has formed itself under a power which is hierarchical, legislative, judicial, and administra-



tive ; that is to say, under a power enjoying all the attributes necessary to the real existence of a society. Such is Catholic society in fact, and I demonstrated this ten years ago, when, appearing for the first time in this pulpit, and seizing the Catholic phenomenon by its most visible side, I treated of the organization of the Church, and this releases me from the necessity of halting before it to-day. I shall pass on, then, and I shall cause you to remark that the name of Catholic awakens not only the idea of intellectual unity in an organic and living body, but that, in addition, it signifies the universal expansion of that unity: a prodigy so great, that the Church, inspired by God and disdaining all her other titles, such as those of *one*, of *holy*, of *apostolic*, which she also held from the first Œcumenic Council of Nice, has retained the name of *Catholic*, as the name which of all others belongs to her, and which, in the highest degree incommunicable, best explains that divine and creating power, which, after having endowed her with light, holiness, unity, organization, ended by launching her into the world with that last crown of universality.

Let us then speak of Catholic society ; let us speak of its expansion in space and in mankind. This is the object of the present conference, in which you will again see so many new proofs of the omnipotence of our doctrine, that I shall end by growing weary of relating them to you. Yes, the scruple which I feel sometimes, gentlemen, is, that I may tire you by that long exposition of miracles ; that by continually repeating to you that the finger of God is there, the prodigy may appear to you but as a common thing. Support me against so singular a fear ; let us learn to consider the divine work to the end, so varied, moreover, as it is, in its uniformity of power, wisdom, and goodness.

The Church is Catholic, that is to say, universal ; and, indeed, if it be true that God has founded a society, how

could it have been the privilege of a caste, or of a people, of a continent, or a hemisphere? If God has willed to build up a social edifice, assuredly He has prepared it for all. Whilst men, whatever may be the magnanimity of their designs, work for themselves, for their nation, for a glory and an horizon which are always limited, God causes His sun to shine upon all; He gives light to the eagles on the tops of the mountains, and to the obscure birds which sing to their Creator under the shadow of an ear of corn. He is as mindful of a blade of grass as of a cedar; He is as concerned about an atom as about a planet, and universality being the characteristic of the least of His works, how much more should a society, formed by His hands for the preservation and the propagation of truth, be stamped by Him with the same seal. Not that, in spite of the desire to extend and insure the reign of light among men, He does violence to our liberty, and does not permit us to escape from the meshes of the net which He has spread over us; no, this right remains to us in all its plenitude, and it explains to us the apparent weaknesses of the divine work. If the net break, as the Gospel expressly says it, it is because the work of God does not exclude the work of man, and because liberty shows itself through sovereignty, without however destroying the character of the superior and commanding action, which finally triumphs even in the temporary imperfection of the result.

The Church, said we, the intellectual society founded by the doctrine of Jesus Christ, is Catholic or universal in its expansion. But, in order thoroughly to understand this, let us remark a second time that it is not a question of a simple expansion of the immutable and fundamental ideas which constitute Christianity; that would even be a magnificent universality; and, nevertheless, that is but a part of the mystery of diffusion which we called Catholicity. Besides the expansion of doctrinal unity, Cathol-

icity carries with itself the expansion of the hierarchical, legislative, judicial, and administrative unity; it involves the creation of an universal doctrinal power, of an universal hierarchical power, of an universal legislative power, of an universal judicial power, of an universal administrative power—that which is simply the height of extravagance. Behold the thesis of Catholicity.

Even if Protestants should spread their doctrine over the whole world, even if that doctrine should be as single and unchangeable as it is divided and full of change, what would they have accomplished? They would have scattered the Bible in the world, and with the Bible, certain ideas which are contained therein; but they would not have set up the universality of their hierarchy, since they have none; of their legislature, since they have none; of their magistracy, since they have none; of their administration, since they have none. They would have produced an intellectual masterpiece, but one which would contain nothing comparable to that of Catholic society, establishing everywhere, with its doctrine, its hierarchical, legislative, judicial and administrative unity. It appears to me that the terms of the mystery are understood.

And this little design, gentlemen, this little design of a Catholic establishment in the world, has not been the design of God alone. In ages long past, even without going back to Nimrod, Ninus, and Sesostriis, kings cherished that idea; and following the example of Nebuchadnezzar, they assembled their great ones and their generals, in the solitude of their cabinets, to declare to them that they intended to submit the world to their dominion; for a very long time, also, those dreams of the giant have vanished away at the waking of reality; for as soon as man wills to extend himself, as soon as he touches space, he meets, even in material nature, with an insurmountable obstacle to his ambition. The ancients well said that

Nature abhorred a vacuum ; they might have said even better, that it abhorred universality ; I mean, that factitious universality by which we would bring it into subjection, under the same sceptre, and under the same hand. Space is admirable under this head. God has raised up for it three kinds of barriers against the ardor of our political and religious invasions. The first is distance. In proportion as the radius leaves the centre, its dependence inclines ; at a hundred leagues men obey, at a thousand they scarcely obey, at three thousand they obey no more ; all bonds are set loose, and become broken by the sole effect of distance. If some momentary unity exists between the metropolis and the colony, time will not be slow to sound the hour of their freedom. History is full of these warnings which distance unceasingly gives to our pride.

But distance is not the only rampart with which nature has armed space against our enterprises of universality. If distance be the sword of space, configuration is its shield. And what a shield, cast and chiselled by a master's hand ! Let your eye follow those chains of mountains, so artistically placed to create impregnable frontiers ; those burning sands which the dromedary and the camel can hardly cross, and which the winds also protect against the march of the traveller or of the conqueror ; those arid and uninhabited steppes where despotism has no more cardinal points upon which to rear its head ; those pestilential swamps ; those islands lost in the bosom of the sea, and guarded by reefs of rocks ; those icebergs of the poles ; those tempests of the ocean ; all those thousand obstacles distributed with so much skill, and which sixty centuries of efforts and exploration have not overcome.

This was not enough. Climate has appeared to confederate with distance and configuration in order to make of the entire globe a challenge to our powerlessness. The

sun has chosen a course which conveys his heat to us with calculated avarice and prodigality; a few days' march, a few degrees of latitude passed, and that mighty man, Cyrus, Cambyzes, or whoever you will, can no longer bear his helmet or his cuirass! Another day, yet another step before the sun, and that brilliant army, which felt sure of the empire of the world, sinks under the invisible pressure of the atmosphere; the trooper dismounts and places himself under the shadow of his horse; the foot-soldier lies down upon the earth; they are become like a child who begins to walk an hour too soon, and who hangs on to the dress of his nurse! We touch the fortunate shores of Italy; it seems as if its sky and ours were two brothers, born at an interval only of a single year; yet who has not beheld the grief of some child of Italy, who has been transported by exile to dwell under those clouds of France which delight us so much? The poor exile reanimates himself in vain under the rays of our liberty; his head droops by the weight of remembrance and regret, like a flower which has been transported from a distant land to a foreign soil, and which pines away in it without bloom or perfume, because it is deprived of the sun, the shade, and the breezes of its own country.

Thus does space resist our dreams of universality, and all the conquerors, one after the other, have marched by this road to their destruction. When the young Macedonian, after Granicus, Issus, and Arbela, had touched the banks of the Indus, and his restless heart carried him still further, even until he should have graven his name at the very limits of the earth, his army made him halt. In vain did he hide himself in his tent, armed with the sullen consciousness of all his glory; he was compelled to yield, and to proceed to Babylon, to die at a feast, not knowing what more to make of his power and of his ambition. The Romans, that race so patient in preparing its con-



quests, so eager to extend them, and which knew so well how to blend solidity in extent—the Romans knew the same shoal. Having reached the Rhine and the Euphrates, they found there a barrier, which the counsels of their senate and the agitations of their forum were unable to raise. Beyond the Rhine, Varus left the bones of his legions; and beyond the Euphrates, Crassus paid with his life and his fame for the rashness which he showed in determining to pass over. Examples did not become exhausted; even in our own age we have witnessed the pompous return of them. For a long time the last of the captains riveted destiny at his will; the Alps and the Pyrenees had trembled under him; Europe, in silence, listened to the rumor of his design, when, weary of that domain in which glory had spent all its resources to humor and gratify him, he precipitated himself even to the confines of Asia. There his glance became troubled, and his eagles turned their heads for the first time. What did he then meet in his way? Was it a more skilful general than himself?—No. An army which he had not yet conquered?—No. Or, perhaps, it was age which already had begun to chill his genius?—No. What did he then meet with? He met with the protector of the weak, the haven of oppressed nations, the great defender of human liberty; he encountered space, and all his power failed under his feet.

For if God has created such barriers in the bosom of nature, it is because He has had pity upon us. He knew all that violent unity contains of despotism and misery for the human race, and He has prepared inaccessible retreats for us in the mountains and in the deserts; he hollowed out the rock of Saint Anthony and of Saint Paul, the first hermit; he has woven the grass of the nests to which the eagle will not come to take away the little ones of the dove. O ye inaccessible mountains, ye eternal snows, ye

burning sands, ye pestilential swamps, ye deadly climates, we give you thanks for the past, we trust in you for the future ! Yes, you will preserve for us some free oasis, some solitary Thebais, some unknown by-ways ; you will not cease to protect us against the powerful of this world ; you will not permit chemistry to prevail against nature, and to make of this globe, so well kneaded by the hand of God, a species of horrible and narrow dungeon, where nothing but its vapors would be freely inhaled, and where fire and the sword would be the chief officers of a merciless autocracy.

But it may be that doctrines have accomplished what the conquerors were powerless to perform ? Not a whit more, gentlemen ; and a word will suffice to show this to you. Amongst doctrines, the one of which the expansive action has been the most remarkable, and which has the least imperfectly imitated the manner of action of Christianity, is incontestably Indian Buddhism ; for Mahometanism cannot be compared to it, since Mahometanism has never been anything but a violent conquest, and must be classed in the remarks which we offered just now upon the conquerors. Indian Buddhism has enjoyed, on the contrary, a pacific and extended propagation, which justly attracts attention, when we study the comparative expansion of doctrines. Its process is easy, however, and its name Indian decides the question. Why is it that Buddhism has limited its proselytizing and its progress to the two almost islands of India, to Thibet, to Tartary, to China, and to Japan ? It is true, those regions are considerable in extent ; but what weakness must there be in a doctrine which travels so far in contiguous and analogous countries, and which, as soon as that development is acquired, becomes buried there, all living, without advancing another step either by land or sea ! We enjoy liberty of worship in France. Why does not the Grand Lama

of Thibet send us missionaries? What has he to fear? During the six hundred years in which he has seen members of our religious orders, and has parodied our worship, what hinders him from evincing his gratitude and from initiating us into the ideas of Buddha? Observe, gentlemen, I speak only of ideas, when it is also a question of hierarchical, legislative, judicial, and administrative action. But it would be to require too much of Buddhism, to ask who upon the earth obeyed the Grand Lama, and of what organic society he is really the centre and the unity. Let us confine ourselves to ideas, and, by that effort of Buddhism, so vain, so narrow, and which is however the most vast attempt of doctrinal universality without the pale of Christianity, judge of the miracle of Catholicity. Judge of it by the limited space upon which all the other organic societies move which people the universe. What is the largest empire of the world upon a geographical map? What was that famous monarchy of Spain and the Indies upon which the sun never set? A few degrees of latitude and longitude beat all human power, and it is a maxim that space destroys unity.

Catholic doctrine alone has escaped from that law of finite things. Scarcely was it steeped in the blood which flowed from the cross, scarcely was it animated with the wind of Pentecost, than it passed the Euphrates and the Rhine, visited Scythia, India, Ethiopia, and whilst the empire became divided between masters, or its land ceded to the barbarians by whom it was besieged, it spread upon the multiple surface of the Roman soil its doctrinal, hierarchical, legislative, judicial, and administrative unity, binding together and strengthening its social organism in proportion as the old world saw its own perish. England, Hibernia, Germany, all the regions of the North opened to it, each in its time, their newest territory. It passed the Cape of Good Hope with Vasco di Gama, it descended in

America with Christopher Columbus, with the cross in its hand ; it followed all the adventurers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, elevating by the side of their names the names of Las Casas, of Saint Louis Bertrand, of Saint François Xavier ; founding communities of Christians under the shelter of the places of public resort, following and charming savages even in their most secret forests. Where is it not found now ? Where is it not found with its complete unity ? See, it spreads itself, without being divided, in all the bays of Oceania. From the elevation of his chair, one and immutable, the Father of a hundred and fifty millions of men scattered all over the earth raises his voice which teaches, he is believed ; he names bishops, they are received ; he promulgates a law, it is respected ; he pronounces a judgment, it is submitted to ; he regulates ceremonies, they are performed. Distance, configuration, climate, nothing deteriorates from the majesty which commands, and the obedience which accomplishes ; or if any difference is visible between the respect which is near, and that which is distant, it is entirely in favor of power in proportion as it is disarmed.

What a miracle, gentlemen ! England reaches everywhere by her policy and her ships ; but tell her to set up somewhere her hierarchy, her legislation, her magistracy, and her administration, without subjecting to herself by force the part of the globe whence she would carry them — England would believe that you were mocking at her. This is, however, that which Catholic Rome accomplishes every day, without exciting any attention, so much is its organic and universal sovereignty become a natural element of humanity. That same England of which I spoke has been seen to separate from Rome, to proscribe her, to invent atrocious torments against her ; and notwithstanding all this parade, during three hundred consecutive years, Rome has preserved in the heart of that haughty

island a Christendom which received her envoys, her laws, her decisions, which prayed with her, which thought with her, which suffered and rejoiced with her, which died happy with her. Again, gentlemen, I exclaim, what a miracle! and how is it to be explained?

Ah! I am about to tell you. It is because nature revolts against pride and domination; but against truth, against good, against God, there are no mountains nor deserts, nor ice-bound continents, nor burning sun, nor stormy seas, nor armed barriers. And this is why the Prophet so long ago announced that universal power which is in the Church, and, enjoying the prospect of it from feelings of love, he did not grow weary of throwing down to Nature a triumphal challenge; thus we hear Isaiah in the very office of to-day, crying out with all his strength: *"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked paths shall become straight, and the rough ways plain."*<sup>1</sup> And elsewhere, and a thousand times repeated: *"Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people, make the road plain, pick out the stones, and lift up the standard, that the world may see it."*<sup>2</sup> And why, O prophet, why must the gates be opened, the barriers fall, and nature loose all her jealous precautions? Ah! answers the Prophet: *"It is because the King cometh, He cometh, the Just and the Saviour: He is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."*<sup>3</sup> Behold that which opens all and which changes all. *"Open ye the gates, and let the just nation that keepeth the truth enter in."*<sup>4</sup> Science had not passed through those gates; power had not passed through; Nineveh, Babylon, Alexander, the Romans, had not passed through; but the Son of man, riding upon the

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah, ch. 40, v. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah, ch. 62, v. 10.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 21, v. 5; and Zacharias, ch. 9, v. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah, ch. 26, v. 2.



foal of an ass, He will enter, He has passed through, and He has entered never to depart.

Will you yet again ask me why? and shall I tell you again under another form? It is because truth imparts the courage necessary to ascend the mountains, to dwell in the deserts, and to become inured to the sun. A missionary leaves his country, knowing well that he will live only ten years; what matters it to him? The truth which he announces is eternal; eternity will render back to him the days which he will lose. Nothing will give you back yours, O men, who work but for yourselves; nothing will be your recompense but yourselves. But God remembers a cup of water given in His name; the apostle knows this, he quits his country, his family, he quits even himself, to carry to the extremities of the world the cup of the water of truth; and it is that cup of water, protected by God, who sends it, and by the charity which bears it, it is that cup of water which triumphs over that space upon which all the conquerors have perished. Let us pursue its destinies, and after having seen it battling with nature, let us behold it battling with flesh and blood.

Humanity, like space, possesses infinite resources in itself against the expansion of universality. The first is its division by races. For although the human race springs from one unique and primordial trunk, and the same blood flows in its veins, yet it has an extreme, and an almost inexplicable facility of drawing from that primitive unity generations distinct from each other by their physiognomy, their disposition, their tastes, their customs, and their history. If these distinctive characters were variable and untransmissible, there would be no races; race supposes at the same time a variation in the species, and the perpetuity of that variation; that is to say, the concurrence of a moving force to produce diversity, and of an immutable force to maintain it. However difficult

it may be to understand this phenomenon, so much so that some *savants* have preferred to doubt the common origin of mankind, yet it touches us so nearly and on so many sides, that we verify it each moment in families, provinces, and nations. Any one who has travelled recognizes at a glance an Englishman, a Spaniard, an Italian, a German, nations, however, so near to each other, and bound up together for more than a thousand years, by religion, by peace, by war, by commerce, by letters, by arts, and almost by the same sky, so moderate are the differences of climate among them. Even in France, under the empire of a social unity, which has without doubt had its gradation, but which has always more or less existed, the type of the provinces of the monarchy is still visible to the eye of the observer. He would never confound the Frenchman of the North with the Frenchman of the South; the Breton with the Aquitain; the Bourguignon with the Auvergnât. If such be the power of race in adjacent countries, notwithstanding so many causes which should destroy it, what must it be with regard to the Greek and the Hindoo, the Caribbean and the Chinese? Three great primitive races—those of Shem, Ham, and Japhet, have divided the human family into three branches marked with a powerful character of diversity; and even in these branches, that diversity has become multiplied almost without end, with equal mobility and perseverance, and makes of the moral world that which distance, configuration, and climate, have made of the physical world—a theatre, rebellious against every attempt at universality. It was even necessary in order that, the nations counterbalancing each other, our destinies might not be at the mercy of the first nation which became the strongest.

This obstacle was not prepared against the power of truth and charity; so Catholic society has passed over it

with a very easy effort. From the race of Shem, in which it held all its ancient roots by the Jewish people, it lighted upon the race of Japhet, which filled Europe, without neglecting Africa, the old country of Ham. Compared with the great branches, its mixture with the inferior shoots is of trifling importance: the Barbarians, one after another, recognized it for their mother; and when the two Indies became open in the East and in the West before our fortunate navigators, the hundred races of these new continents looked not to the skin of the Church: it was colored by the blood of Jesus Christ, which is the universal blood.

This assimilation of Catholic society to all the races of men is so much the more remarkable, gentlemen, as they are not all in the same state of social culture; and thus, besides the difference of their native character, they also appertain to different ages; which are, barbarism, civilization, decadence, and the savage state.

Barbarism is the infancy of races; it is known by the predominance of the body over the mind. The life of the barbarian is drawn from blood, and not from thought. On the contrary, when the mind begins to prevail over the body, it is the announcement of the reign of civilization, an illustrious reign consecrated by the development of letters, of the arts and sciences, by a dignified and simple activity which fills life in elevating it. At the epoch of decadence, the body resumes the superiority; not the coarse and rude body of the barbarian, but the body polished, perfumed, wasted, full of intelligence, and yet, having returned to the most debasing instincts, which ignorance no longer excuses, which vigor does not explain, and which transforms the soul so fallen into the ignoble *repaire* of a delicate and subtle egotism. The savage state, the last of all, is the return to barbarism, but to a ruined barbarism, which is no longer capable of sustaining the rudiments of a society.

It is not difficult, gentlemen, to perceive what obstacles the expansion of universality meets with, in those ages of generations which are so diverse, and with what suppleness of organs the Church must be endowed in order to become assimilated to them, without losing any of the fulness of her own age, and of the eternity of her civilization. You know whether she has succeeded. Do you ask how, with regard to barbarism? She converted those multitudes of men who consumed the Roman empire. With regard to civilization? She was formed in the Augustan age; she herself formed the age of Leo X. and that of Louis XIV. To decadence? The Lower Empire is there to speak of her action upon it. In fine, with regard to the savage state? She created Paraguay; and from the banks of La Plata to the lakes and mountains of Canada, she has caused herself to be loved by the wandering tribes of the two Americas, with an artless and holy affection, which touches the heart more even than the scenes of the catacombs and the martyrs. She has then subjected all; she has assimilated all to herself in the scale of races and in the social ages; nations in a state of infancy; nations in a state of manhood; nations in a state of old age; nations returned again to the state of infancy. But even this is not the most decisive success of her universality; in having had to deal with races, she had to deal with something more terrible than differences of origin, of culture and customs, she encountered the obstacle of nationality.

A nation is a race condensed in a territory and in an organization. Organization is no other thing than the unity resulting from a hierarchical, legislative, judicial, and administrative power. This power is the very heart even of a nation, all its life, all its history, all its pride, since by it only does a nation become a body, by it alone that nation acts, by it alone it subsists. That single word,



gentlemen, reveals to you the abyss into which we have just fallen. A nation is a real and an organic unity, possessing all the attributes of power, and consequently when Catholic society, having also all the attributes of power, presents itself to a nation, it asks neither more nor less than for that nation to admit within itself—into its homes, upon its public places, in its councils—another hierarchy than its national hierarchy, another legislature than its national legislature, another magistracy than its national magistracy, another administration than its national administration, another unity than its national unity, another existence than its existence, another sovereignty than its sovereignty. I demand of you, gentlemen, is this possible? The poet has said :

*"On ne partage pas la grandeur souveraine."*

And a nation is asked to divide its purple; they desire that, as Saint Martin cut his mantle in two to cover a poor man with it, a nation should cut its vestment in twain, not to give to the poor, but to give to one richer than itself, to a society which calls itself universal, and which by that fact has no assignable limits in space and in time! I ask you again, humanly speaking, is this possible?

The difficulty must, indeed, be great, since even now, and you know it, notwithstanding the ascendancy of a thing accomplished, although France is a Catholic nation, and the ideas of liberty of conscience are deeply seated, yet one of the obstacles to the religious reconciliation of minds in our country is the prejudice which reproaches us with belonging to a foreign sovereign. I do not justify this prejudice, but it exists; it is, perhaps, pardonable in those who are not enlightened by divine light, and who, leaving history aside, judge of the most profound things by certain appearances or conclusions of common-sense. Let us not forget it, gentlemen; in our discussions let us



learn to pity those who have not the same faith as ourselves, and whom we ask to respect a miracle so wonderful as the miracle of Catholicity. For, in fact, this miracle is accomplished, notwithstanding its apparent incompatibility with the sacred rights of nations. It is admitted in Europe, and among all the civilized nations of the old and of the new continents, that there exist two powers, distinct from each other in their nature and in their object, both of them coming from God, both sovereign, each in its sphere, having power to separate or unite together according to the equitable conditions reciprocally accepted. This dogma, at the same time human and divine, is regarded as one of the palladiums of liberty and of civilization; and, notwithstanding the influence of national prejudices, no enlightened man will ever comprehend a religion deriving its life from the same source as temporal rights and interests, governed by the same laws, and sustained by the same hands. Our age, gentlemen, opened under those grand auspices of a treaty between the two powers, between Catholic society, represented by an old man, whose predecessor died a captive, and French society, represented by a young consul, but one whom victory had aged before time, and prepared for one of those solemn offices which found or save nations. At the sound of his voice, in spite of the still living sneer of the eighteenth century, the standards of the republic and the cross of Jesus Christ bent to acknowledge and to meet each other, and astonished Europe, seeing that the conqueror of the pyramids protected that embracing with the magic of his fame, learned that Jesus Christ was still the master of the world.

I should stop here, gentlemen, for what more can I say? Remains there anything in the miracle of Catholicity which is not revealed to your admiration? Perhaps, gentlemen, perhaps! From race and from nation-

ality the love of country is engendered in the heart of man, a deeply-seated and an exclusive sentiment, which nourishes itself upon the history of the past and the recollections of our personal life, into which is referred all that we have seen, done, or been, from the hallowed days of our infancy even to the agitations of our maturity and the perspective of our tomb. There, all is holy ; there, nothing should be lost ; no transaction should touch the threshold of a part of our soul which is so much revered. But will not our inscription in another society, which is universal, our adhesion to ideas and to laws of a higher order, our association with eternal destinies, wither the love of country at its roots ? Here, gentlemen, you, at least, who are Christians, can answer for me. You know with what skill God has blended in your heart the Catholic sentiment and the patriotic sentiment ; by what movement, simple and unperceived by yourselves, you make but one thing of the home of your infancy, of the church, the burying-ground, the woods, the fields, of prayer, and of friendship—those dear and pious elements of your life, by which it is no more disordered than is the flower by the earth from which it draws its sap, and by the heaven in which it respires. The history of the world responds to the history of your hearts. It has proclaimed, loud enough to be heard everywhere, in battles and in councils, the devotedness of Catholics in the days when their country had need of them. It has declared whether or not patriotism has diminished in the world since Jesus Christ, and whether, as in times past, because the temple has grown greater, men fight no longer for *home and altar*—those two sacred things which the ancients never separated. It is impossible to doubt in this matter. Every Catholic nation has had its Machabees ; religion has taken part in their glory and in their interests, without ceasing to be universal ; it has blessed, without any treason, ban-

ners opposed to each other ; it has sung the hymn of victory, and honored defeat at the same time, even as God from His throne, notwithstanding the diversity of nations and events, extends over all the affectionate impartiality of His love. No one can be deceived here ; every one feels that country and the Church, the national sentiment and the religious sentiment, so far from excluding each other, are strengthened the one by the other, elevated the one by the other, and that, touching the bosoms of each of us, heaven and earth will produce there that celebrated cry :

“ A tous les cœurs *chrétiens* que la patrie est chère ! ”

How has that fusion been accomplished ? By what mystery do time and eternity produce in this regard the same sound ? It matters little to us whether we know or remain in ignorance on the subject. Let us accept the blessings of God, even when we know not from what treasure He has drawn them forth. He has made country, He has made the church ; it is He also who has made the love which He requires of us for both.

My task is performed, gentlemen ; the prodigy of Catholicity is fully known to you. It takes its first root in the public unity of minds founded by Catholic doctrine ; that unity has received an organization which is not to be separated from it, and which makes of it a living body endowed with all the attributes of social power ; and, in fine, doctrinal and organic unity, in spite of the resistances of nature and of humanity to all unlimited expansion, has ended by spreading itself out into that universal kingdom which the Scriptures call the kingdom of God.

However, gentlemen, this kingdom is not universal by an absolute universality ; men enter into it by an act of their will ; they leave it also by an act of their will. Many among you are still strangers to it : I pray them to inquire if they ought any longer to refuse to it their obedience.

Have they away from it found any resting-place for their ideas? Have they met with any unity in the minds of men? Are they satisfied with themselves and with the world? If they be not, why do they hesitate to enter into the kingdom of immutability, of unity, and of universality? The marvels which they have heard of it are visible enough to move their minds, and the light which is still wanting to them is that which awaits them in the sanctuary, and which is never seen from without. I invite them to enter, and I say to them: Come and taste: a day within is worth to you more than a thousand on the *parvis*.

## THIRTY-SECOND CONFERENCE.

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OF THE INFLUENCE OF CATHOLIC SOCIETY UPON NATURAL  
SOCIETY AS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF RIGHT.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

EVERY society has an object, and, in consequence, Catholic society, that great society which God has founded upon earth, has also an object. What is it? It is not, gentlemen, a terrestrial object; being divinely founded, Catholic society has a divine object. It is the visible germ of a city which is not yet seen, but which is the only true one, for which all things have been made, and of which St. Paul said: "*We have here below no continuing city, but we seek one which is to come.*" Catholic society is the preparation of the eternal society of the just with God; it forms and matures souls who will merit, some day, to behold it in the nakedness of its essence, and to possess it in love which will have no end. But does this mystical and supreme object exclude all other objects? Is this final benefit preceded by any other benefit? What is the relation of Catholic society with natural society: that is to say, with the society which results from our actual wants and interests? Is there any divorce between the one and the other? Does the divine society pass along by human society with disdain, being exclusively pre-occupied about its ulterior end; or does it hold out a helping and



friendly hand ; and are they seen moving on together like two sisters, who are not of the same blood, but who have a common father ? In other words, has the expansion of Catholic society in space and time been a favorable or an unfavorable event for humanity, or even an event which has not affected the visible destinies of mankind ? I answer boldly, gentlemen, that the development of Catholic society has produced in the world, by an inevitable counteraction designed by God, the most unlooked-for and the most desirable of revolutions. This will be the object of the Conferences which will follow. I shall not trace out for you beforehand the course and the plan of them ; you know that it is not my custom to do so. I am not like a great road, designed and laid down with skill, but like a simple path which follows the steepes of the mountain as best it can, and conducts you to the end whilst concealing it from your view. You will easily pardon me for it, gentlemen ; the great point is to arrive at that end, and I hope, with the grace of God, that we shall not wander away from it.

Natural society has for its basis, justice ; justice, *juris subsistentia*, is the stability of right and law ; right is that which is due to every one : but what is that which is due to every one ? This is the question. Natural society, then, reposes upon justice, justice upon right, and right upon a problematical question. Men dispute about right as they dispute about truth ; they dispute about the rule of acting as about the rule of thinking. Question about truth, question about justice, there are no others upon earth, and these two questions are sufficient in themselves to give the impetus to all the struggles which will end only with the human race.

It is not true, gentlemen, that as there exist in the order of truth ideas which may be seized at a glance by the intelligence, there do not also exist primordial and

powerful rules in the order of right, which are well named by us *the law of nature*; but, even as the truths of common-sense are confined within a very limited circle, neither do the principles of the natural law widely extend their jurisdiction. It is manifest to us that there exists a difference between good and evil, and that it is not the same thing to assassinate a father as to help and venerate him. Yet what are these elementary prescriptions when it becomes a question of justly determining the very complicated relations of a great people, of bringing persons, and things, and acts into harmony, and of subjecting to order even the most unforeseen events? The most steady politicians are seen hesitating and troubled before this work; they advance a step, and then retreat, like the pilot who seeks his chart in the sky, but from whom the passing clouds and the motion of the waves constantly hide the polar star.

The rule of justice must, however, be fixed; for no community is able either to form itself or to exist without a rule of relations, since it is no other thing than a vast assemblage of relations. Up to the moment when law intervenes to make them co-ordinate, the community is but a fortuitous assemblage of unconnected interests and men; the law is the tie which draws them into community with themselves and God, which creates for them a territory, a sovereignty, a country, a future. But who is to lay down that law? Who is to decide in matters concerning command and obedience, labor and rest, the acquisition and the loss of goods, punishments and honors? Who will trace out for the infant society the path which it is to follow through all the hazards of time, and prepare a code of justice for it which is capable of resisting all the vicissitudes of things and of the passions of men? A voluntary and primitive convention? A few men meeting together on the outskirts of a forest, moved by instincts of

defence or of depredation, who shall settle by a compact the rudiments of a great society? It has been said, gentlemen, it has been written in a work, which even now is renowned, and yet the author himself, by a retrospective glance, which has not been the least eminent of his faculties, the author of the *Contrat Social* has ended by avowing that which history loudly proclaims; namely, that every human society has for its father a legislator. The legislator, the man of Providence, establishes the law; he establishes it with authority, by virtue of an ascendancy of which God is the first cause, but which issues secondarily from the qualities of the man and the wants of the community. Thus, Moses, Lycurgus, Solon, Numa, are venerated names, inscribed upon the pedestal which bears the statue of great nations. But, however memorable their work may have been, and even without excepting Moses, how far has it been from attaining to all that which mankind should hope for from a legislation? Mankind stands in need of a fundamental principle of justice, of an immutable law, of an universal law: no legislator before Jesus Christ had given this to men.

I understand, by fundamental principle of justice, not a code of such a nature as that which serves as the basis of a particular society, because of the antiquity and authority of the legislator, but a code which penetrates so far into the heart of the just and the true, that the force of experience, the successive criticism of generations, and the course of history, can never accuse it of imperfection, nor disturb the empire on its account. Thus, for example, when Moses, coming down from Sinai, bore to his people this commandment—" *Thou shalt rest on the Sabbath-day, and keep it holy*"—it was an element of the fundamental principle of justice. Admire, even in considering only the human side of that prescription, what profound knowledge of our nature it supposes in the legislator, what a

disinterested perception of the relation between the rich and the poor—the man who labors, and the man who causes others to labor. Was it not necessary to possess a very extraordinary sentiment of justice, a rare foresight, so that, from so distant a period, a law so strange in appearance might be established, but which the future has so explained and justified, that every society which ventures to despise it attacks the dignity, the intelligence, the liberty, the morality, and even the health of the people, and gives it over bound hand and foot to the cupidity of its masters, until it become a simple productive machine: lost, soul and body, it falls into the hands of the first conqueror who, in respecting the seventh day, will have kept open the source of religion, of good morals, and of military power? This is what I call creating a fundamental principle of justice, a law which can never recede, which is for ever sacred: and why sacred? Because it springs from a glance from the very seat of justice, from a flash of light descended from on high, where unchangeable and substantial order dwells in God, and from whence those gleams of equity which enlighten us, flow upon us more or less abundantly, and which, according to their distribution, form the destinies of societies.

Now; gentlemen, which of the legislators of antiquity has founded a fundamental principle of justice in all its plenitude! Moses, of whom perhaps I ought not to speak, since he belongs, by his history and by his legislation, to Catholic society—Moses himself has succeeded in it but imperfectly; and, as to all the others, it will be useless to seek in their works for anything sufficiently essential to have become the groundwork of law, the primordial and visible type of all established justice. The human race stood in need of this type; it did not receive it from them. The laws of Menou, of Minos, of Solon, of Lycurgus, of Numa, the most celebrated institutions, fall to the ground;



they are monuments which have become destroyed, because their virtue was of too ordinary a nature to have sufficiently reflected the eternal physiognomy of uncreated justice.

Nor have they to any greater extent borne the character of immutability, without which the best legislation is powerless to protect those who live under its guardianship; for every changeable law is at the mercy of the strongest, whatever may be the form of government, whether the nation has at its head an unique chief or a body which deliberates; in the one and in the other case, the fate of all, or at least the fate of the minority, is without any protector, if there do not exist between the sovereign and his subjects an inviolable law, which covers the entire community, and secures the meanest citizen against the encroachments of the greater number, and even of all. As long as law does not reach this point, it is nothing. Jean Jacques Rousseau has said: "If the people will do harm to themselves, who has the right to hinder them?" I answer: Everybody; for everybody is interested in seeing that the people do not misuse their force and their unanimity, seeing that their unanimity invariably falls back finally upon some one, and that it is, in fact, only a form of oppression which is disguised by the very excess of its weight. It is against all that law is necessary, much more than against any one; for number has the inconvenience of joining to the material power the sanction of apparent justice. But law is only something against all when it is endowed with immutability, and, in virtue of that resemblance to God, offers an invincible resistance to the weaknesses of the community as well as to its powerful conspiracies.

I say the weaknesses of the community, for it should fear them as much as its strength. It may be oppressed, as it may become the oppressor, and it requires to have within itself an element which, by its consistency, would dis-



courage that secret tide of revolutions which time draws along after itself. All legislators have had an instinctive knowledge of this, and they have done all that they were able to do to give to their work the impress of immutability. You know what Lycurgus did. He obtained from the Lacedemonians, under the faith of an oath, "that they should not change his laws until his return from the journey destined by him to consult the gods." But the gods kept him far from Laconia, which he preferred never to see again, rather than bring back to it with his presence a cause of instability. It was an heroic action, an act truly antique: what more could man do against time? And yet, what a fragile basis for the immortality of a legislation! The sublime exile was unable to succeed; his laws had a shorter duration than Sparta, and his spirit did not rise from his tomb to remind the prevaricators of the sacredness of their plighted oaths.

It has been the same with all the others. Their laws have perished in the same nation which had created or reformed them; every age has borne away some shreds of them; and the rest, such as those which yet survive, have become a mere relic, subject to dissertations in our schools.

You do not expect, gentlemen, that such feeble laws should have acquired the honors of universality; it never even dreamed of such a thing. It perceived the idea of immutability; that of universality was completely foreign to it. The community was for the community, it did not go beyond; its law was its own property, the gift to itself which it had received from the gods; the rest of the world was excluded from it as enemies, and the justice of men left to the vanquished enemy no asylum against servitude, death, and extermination. Even in the heart of the community, the entire population was not called to participate in the law; the citizen alone, the initiated of the country, could invoke it, and demand of it author-

ity, assistance, and honor ; the others, even to the feet of the altars, were subjected to a forced expatriation, and, although present, they found themselves banished from all.

Neither fundamental principle of justice, nor immutable nor universal justice ; such, gentlemen, was the ancient law. A threefold inhumanity was its basis. In default of a fundamental principle of justice, which should mount even to the sources of equity, the feeble had no protection against the strong ; in default of an immutable law, the lesser number was without arms against the greater ; in default of an universal law, man was the enemy of his fellow-man. Jesus Christ found human society in that horrible state of powerlessness with regard to its fundamental principle—which is justice ; it will be in vain, out of hatred to Him, to search in antiquity ; no other law will be found there than that which I have just declared, and which you have all recognized. What has He made of that miserable society which would chill us with horror, if only one of its days could appear to us in all its vigor ? What has He made of it ? He could have trampled it under His feet, and have thrown its unclean and tyrannical ruins to the winds : He has not done so. He might, at least, have despised it ; and, contenting Himself with founding by its side a pure and an equitable society for just men, have abandoned the ancient society to the opprobrium of the comparison. Nor has he done this. He neither destroyed nor despised ; He has created a community, and raised up the ancient by the new ; He has given to human society that which none of its legislators, even the most famous among them, had given to it : an universal law, an immutable law, a fundamental principle of justice.

This is the spectacle which we are about to contemplate.

Jesus Christ comes into the world ; he is born like all

other men—in a community ; He is born under a particular code of laws ; He is born in a country which has its history, its founder, its conquests, its celebrity ; He is born like a man who was looked for by a great people. And what is the first thing which He does whilst declaring Himself to be the heir of the promises and the hopes of that people ? Does He say, I am a Jew ? I am come to enlarge My nation, and to extend it even to the extremities of the world, farther even than David and Solomon—our fathers ? No, He does not say a word like this, He says simply : I am the Son of man. And perhaps you are not surprised at it ; perhaps it appears natural to you that at each page of the Gospel, Jesus Christ affects to call Himself the Son of man, whilst He but rarely assumes the title of Son of God. However, this is not a thing of such small importance as you may suppose ; and that single expression—the Son of man—contains an entire revolution, the most important which had been ever witnessed. Before Jesus Christ, men said : I am a Greek, a Roman, a Jew ; when menaced or interrogated, they answered proudly : *Civis Romanus sum ego*. Each sheltered himself under his country and city ; Jesus Christ invoked only one title—that of the Son of man, and thereby He announced a new era, the era in which humanity commenced, and in which, after the name of God, nothing can be greater than the name of man, nothing more effectual for obtaining help, honor, and brotherly love. Every word of the Son of man, every one of His acts, bears the impress of that spirit ; and those words and acts together form the Gospel, which is the new and universal law. As soon as the Gospel was in the world, Jesus Christ sends His apostles to bear it to the human race : *Go,*” said He “*and preach the Gospel to every creature.*”<sup>1</sup> Propagation, communion, universality, became

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark, ch. 16, v. 15.

the watchwords of every movement, and there, where before was heard only the sound of egotism, is heard only the quick march of charity.

Where are the Greeks? Where are the Romans? Where is the community? Where are the Hellenic and Quirital laws? Saint Paul can no longer retain in his breast the song of triumphant humanity: "*There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.*"<sup>1</sup> O men, who dwell under the four winds of heaven, men who think you are of different races and have different rights, you know not what you say; you are not here below by thousands and by millions, you are not even two, you are but one.

Therefore man is not alone, nor humanity; but man and humanity are united. Whoever touches man touches humanity; and whoever touches humanity touches God who has made it, who is its father and protector.

The *Comte de Maistre*, excited by his ill temper against the French revolution, and there was some reason for it, has said somewhere in regard to the "*Declaration of the rights of men*:" "In the course of my life I have met with Germans, Frenchmen, Italians, Persians; but I have never met with man." The *Comte de Maistre* was in error, gentlemen; like him, I have met with Germans in Germany, Italians in Italy, Frenchmen in France; but I have also met with man, and I found him in the Gospel.

The Gospel was the Charter of man, the declaration of universal right. But however bold that declaration was, if I may be permitted to speak of boldness in reference to a divine work, it was still only a declaration. It was, perhaps, not impossible that some other had conceived the same idea, and had said like Terence:

"Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto."

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Galatians, ch. 3, v. 28.



As long as the Gospel was but a written word, it was the highest in the world, an unique book, an unequalled design, and that is all. It was necessary that the Gospel, announced to all the earth, should become a divine law, the fundamental rule of human relations, and that even those who denied its divinity as doctrine, should accept its yoke as legislation. Now, is not this what we behold? Has not Catholic society, in extending and in constituting itself from one end of the world to the other, carried with itself the evangelic law? Has it not imposed that law upon all its dispersed and united members? Has it not formed the foundation of general morals, so that a heathen action, even if it may not be repressed by the laws of each country, is become a thing impossible, and a thing which inspires a feeling of horror? It is so, and the reign of the Gospel as law, is much more extended than the reign of the Gospel as idea. He who does not adore God in Jesus Christ, reveres in Him the sage; and there is not one of His enemies who contests with Him the title of the greatest of legislators.

And observe, gentlemen, the evangelic law has not destroyed the particular laws of each community, any more than Catholic society has destroyed human society. Nations continue to be the arbitrators of their destiny, each preserving its own character and all the attributes of power; they make laws as before, with this single difference, that, nourished by the substance of the Gospel, emancipated from antique egotism by a sentiment of general benevolence, which is now to them as innate, they do not sully their code with articles which are unworthy of a Christian heart. The Gospel has not passed over the world like a violent tempest, which tears up institutions by the roots; it was gently poured out upon it, like a healing stream, which penetrates to the sources of life, to purify and reinvigorate it. All things which come from God are



invariably marked with a double sign : unity is in them allied to diversity, universality to individuality, domination to liberty. This is why the Gospel, in freeing the human race from the fetters of narrow justice, has not attacked the existence of nations. An universal law for an universal empire would have been the dream of a man ; God has done better, He has created a common law for a multitude of nations, separated by their origin, their territory, and their institutions. He has left to them the free disposition of themselves, saying to them like a father to sons equally loved : Go and do your will, increase and multiply, declare war and peace, but remember that you are but one in truth and charity.

This great liberty left to nations has, perhaps, materially affected the diffusion of the evangelic law ; it has rendered that diffusion more difficult of accomplishment. But what is difficulty or time ? The work of God is still young, it is not accomplished ; let us leave it to follow patiently the course which it has chosen. If the sun of justice be not yet at its noonday, if it do not inundate all the children of men, without exception, with its light and heat, it is their own fault ; it is because they retreat as soon as it advances towards them. Some day it will travel yet faster ; and as the torch of nature, on nearing the horizon, lights up the east and the west at the same time, so the Gospel, having reached the summit of its power, and become master of the world without ever having constrained it, will fill the past and the future with its glory and its justice.

Already, gentlemen, every nation which does not in any way submit to the evangelic law, is condemned, by the simple force of things, to barbarism. What an unaccountable, and yet what an equally visible thing ! Athens and Rome, before Jesus Christ, attained to civilization ; but since the evangelic law has been promulgated, every nation

which has not recognized it, has, in regard to Christian nations, remained in a state of inferiority, which even now inspires more of scorn than of compassion. Look at the Mussulman; he is six centuries later than we are. Mahomet had the Gospel in his hands; he had power to copy it, and, in fact, he has copied it. Well, what is the Mussulman? What have Greece and Syria become under his domination? What has even the culture of the fields become? What is become of that terrestrial aspect of those countries, which, with so many other famous recollections, have transmitted to us the memory of their mountains and of their valleys? Even the land has not been able to flourish under the ignoble yoke of an administration which has not learned, during the twelve hundred years of its existence, to support an ear of corn. I do not speak of the rest. God has given to them the most beautiful country in the world, after having given them posteriority even to His Gospel, in order to show to us, by that near and remarkable example, into what state the nations fall which reject His known and promulgated Gospel. And it is easy to understand the reason of this. Before Jesus Christ, universal and perfect law existed for no one; nations were, in this regard, all on a footing of equality; it was then possible, in that common misery, that a legislator, supported by fortunate circumstances of race, of time, and of climate, and, above all, by a secret protection of Providence, might elevate a nation to a certain degree of refinement and of moral rectitude. But now that the Gospel has appeared, that the beacon of perfection is lighted up before the eyes of all, the nation which rejects it is necessarily condemned to relations of an inferior order, which do not permit it to sustain a comparison, and which cause it, if it persist, to vegetate in an invincible and degrading barbarism. The Gospel has drawn into itself all the powers of civilization, which, be-

fore, were scattered about in the world; and whoever he may be who aspires to goodness and to glory, can no longer seek elsewhere for them. It was pardonable, it was even praiseworthy in Lycurgus to consult the Delphic oracle; in Numa, to converse with the nymph Egeria: but now the oracle is in Rome, because the Gospel is there in its highest representative, and he who does not go there humbly to draw forth inspirations of sovereign justice, will build nothing but a city without a blessing.

The Gospel was completed, promulgated, established: it became necessary to defend it, and, after universality, to assure to it immutability. This new charge was not a small thing. The Gospel protects all weaknesses against all powers, all purity against all inordinate desires, all modesty against every form of pride; it protects the hyssop against the cedar, the hut against the palace; it was sure to have enemies. The root of heathen morals exists always in the heart of man, and has always its representatives; there exists a tradition of evil as well as a tradition of good, and it is impossible that that occult tradition should not often attain to public power. An emperor desires to repudiate his wife, the evangelic law forbids him to do so; another would marry two, the evangelic law forbids him; a third covets the direction of consciences, the evangelic law forbids it to him. You see what a number of perpetual causes of irritation, what a smouldering and inextinguishable war there is between the heathen law and the Christian law. The Christian law must be defended, but how?

God has undertaken this in a most profound manner. He has given the evangelic law to us, not under the direct form of right, but under the direct form of duty. He has not said to us: Here are your liberties; He has said: Here are your obligations. This difference is a capital difference. It is not that the duty does not include

the right, as the right includes the duty. I cannot owe a duty to you without your having a right against me; and you cannot be bound by a duty towards me, without my possessing a right over you. But right is the selfish side of relations, whilst duty is the generous and devoted side of them; and this is why there is as much difference as between heaven and earth, between devotedness and selfishness, between constituting a society upon duty and constituting it upon right. Therefore, the Gospel, which is the very naturalization of charity, was not a declaration of the rights of man, but a declaration of his duties. And from that follows the whole system of the evangelic defence against heathen persecution. When Bossuet, speaking in a more general manner of the defence of right, desired to give a formula of it in his *Politique Sacrée*, he wrote that admirable phrase which everybody knows: *There is no right against right*. Yet, however energetic and true that phrase may be, still it is not the truly Christian formula; the truly Christian formula is this: *There is no right against duty*.

Whether, then, the evangelic law is attacked in the person of an infant, of a virgin, or of an aged man, they are all armed; the feeble reed will answer like Pius VII., of such gentle and benevolent memory: "Sire, I can easily cede to you my right, but I cannot cede to you my duty; I can love you and admire you, even to giving up my life for you, but I cannot give you up my conscience; I may, O Emperor, lose all things for you, but not my soul; for my soul is eternity, and eternity is more than God—it is man and God together." This is our defence. Between us and the persecutors, it is not the right which creates the obstacle, but the duty; it is not selfishness, but devotedness; right is behind duty, hidden and sheltered by that divine shield.

Besides this, we have no weapons of defence. "*For*,"



said Jesus Christ, "*the very hairs of your head are all numbered; not one of them shall fall, without the permission of your heavenly Father.*"<sup>1</sup> And He Himself, ready the first to die for the Gospel, said to the apostle who drew the sword to defend it: "*Put up thy sword again into its place. For all that take the sword shall perish by the sword;*"<sup>2</sup> that is to say, will make a vain and ineffectual defence. It is the cross which is the prætorian guard of the Gospel. When men have the honor to combat for the cross, they must be in the highest right, right in all the plenitude of respect, right combined with all the humility of love, and then they must take their stand on that last exclamation: I can do nothing, kill me! They may kill one, or two, or three; but to kill a man armed with a duty, is even more than the strongest shoulders can bear. The poet has said:

"La mort d'un honnête est un poids éternel."

And we have even better than this on our side: the salvation of the world commenced by a good man killed on Calvary.

Therefore violence is not the best arm against the evangelic law, nor the greatest peril for its immutability. Right perishes less by violence than by corruption. It was not Attila who was the greatest scourge of liberty and of human dignity, but the éunuuchs of Constantinople. When Jugurtha went out of Rome, and turned round to curse her, he did not hesitate about his anathema, he pronounced but that short phrase: *Emenda civitas*. O city, who seekest only a purchaser! city, who still holdest the balance in which Brennus formerly weighed thy destiny, and who holdest it no longer to purchase, but to sell thyself! It was the gold of Cæsar which was to be feared for the Gospel, much more than his vigorous measures;

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 10, v. 30; St. Luke, ch. 21, v. 18,

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 20, v. 52.



the luxurious ease of the palace, much more than the horror of dungeons ; the seduction of the smile, much more than the severity of a sentence. Jesus Christ then armed his Gospel also against that kind of persecution. He formed for it, for ever, by the virtue of the cross, a militia sober and poor, who, inwardly nourished by the hidden manna of a holy unction, had but little to ask for from the earth, and were always sure of finding that little. If the rich might sometimes create temptations for them, there should also come from them tempests which would devour the evil with the cause, and bring the evangelic tribe back again to simplicity and fidelity. There are recent examples of this. Not long ago you stripped the Church of her goods and of her honors ; you thought, perhaps, that you had destroyed her—you have but purified and reinvigorated her. To corrupt her, you have nothing left but the power of the morsel of daily bread ; but it is just this which is never wanting, and if you take it from her, she will gather up from the earth a morsel still more worthy of honor, and better secured to her.

So we have universal right, and unchangeable right, yet the Gospel is also the fundamental principal of right ; that is to say, it penetrates so far into the just and equitable, that no other more perfect right can be conceived. The Gospel is like the Pandects of Justinian, a book of right ; but a book of right of so singular a nature, that no one can hope to surpass it, or even to imitate it. It has stood erect during eighteen centuries, guarded by the respect of all, and even of its greatest enemies. The human mind, which is so fertile in resources, has not been able to discover either its equal or even a fault in it. It has denied the divinity of Jesus Christ ; but what matters it ? The Gospel remains, it is so written. It has denied the divinity of the Church ; but what matters it ? The Church remains, it is so written. Who, then, has

made this book? From whence is it fallen? Who maintains its empire? After so many changes and trials, so many ruins and foundations, it always remains the same; that is to say, always perfect. It is forgotten for a day; on the morrow it is seen, and men exclaim: The Gospel!

I render justice to this age; it has felt more than any other the evangelic shock, if I may be allowed so to speak: it has understood that a secret tie exists between the Gospel and mankind, and that as long as nothing better than the Gospel is prepared for mankind, as long as a more perfect law is not created, Jesus Christ will continue to reign over the world. This age has understood that the great question was not a question of metaphysics and of history, because the people neither care for, nor have need of, metaphysics or history; but that it was a question of right. No higher or more profound enterprise has yet been conducted against Jesus Christ, but at the same time, none of which the result will be more glorious for truth, and more easy to be understood by all. Let us stand, then, upon this question—the question of right. Our trial is made complete, gentlemen—our trial as Catholics: you know in what condition we found the world with regard to the question of right, and where we have conducted it. Take the heritage in your turn; create a code more universal, more unchangeable, more perfect. We wait for you, and we desire nothing better from you. But, after having seen your first efforts during the last fifty years, I much fear that you will have to labor in vain with regard to right, as you have done with regard to metaphysics and history.

I shall, however, complete my task.

The final character of the ancient law, as you have seen, was inhumanity—a threefold inhumanity, resulting from the sacrifice of the weak to the strong, the smaller to the greater number, and from enmity between man and man. The final character of the new law is, on the contrary, hu-

manity—a threefold humanity; the protection of the weak against the strong, of the smaller against the greater number, and the love of all for all, as if they were but one. This is the character of the superhuman humanity, which forms the foundation and the force of the Gospel; and whoever quits it, however plausible his views may be, and however pure his intentions, re-enters immediately into the heathen conception, that is to say, into inhumanity. Permit me to return to an example, to which I have already made an allusion.

One of our most popular poets complained, that at the time of Louis XIV. the Church ruined the poor by *fêtes*. This was attacking the very heart of the evangelic law. What has happened? The great law of rest—that primitive character of humanity, anterior even to our fall—the law of rest has been sacrificed to the desires of the fabulist and to the figures of the economist. Well, I ask you, are the poor richer, more free, less enslaved to their masters, better in health, more moral, and more happy? Who have profited by the abolition of the charter of rest, but those who make others labor, and who have no need of rest? The poor will discover this sooner or later; they will see that those who desired to free them from an evangelical duty, have, in that very act, robbed them of a precious right which was hidden behind it; that they have been cheated in regard to their money, their health, their judgment, and their hearts. They will return to their old master, Jesus Christ, who understood the rights of the poor, because he was himself poor; they will again embrace his cross, bathed in the tears of those who suffer, and they will cry out, in still stronger love than of old: I come to you, who have never deceived the child of the poor!

It is by the help of Catholic society, that Jesus Christ, the first and last founder of a fundamental principle of

right, of an immutable law, of an universal law, has accomplished and propagated that great social revolution. But there are nations who co-operate therein by a more natural devotedness, or more ardent faith than others. Ours is of this number, gentlemen; our country, since its modern formation, has always been a land of the Gospel, a land of the new law. The election of God is doubtless the cause of this; but, after him, we owe it to the instinct of justice and generosity which is natural to us, to that glorious sentiment of the good and the true, which with us is above the instinct of that which is useful. The errors of our national character have for a century led us away from truth; our hearts will certainly, although slowly, conduct us back to it again. Whenever the experience shall be acquired, and all right founded outside the pages of the Gospel shall be regarded as selfish, the great day of faith will dawn again upon France. And if this resurrection, foreshadowed by so many happy auguries, do not become realized—if the Gospel and the country should become divided—there will be an end of us; because our national character will be no more. France will be nothing more than a dead lion, and will be dragged with a cord about its neck to the *gémonies* of history.

## THIRTY-THIRD CONFERENCE.

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OF THE INFLUENCE OF CATHOLIC SOCIETY UPON NATURAL  
SOCIETY WITH REGARD TO PROPERTY.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

CATHOLIC society has changed the face of human society, by introducing into the world a new law, a law universal and unchangeable, become, by its perfection, the principle and the type of all justice. But this law has not, as you suppose, prevailed without contradiction; and even now, after so long a reign, it has adversaries who seek to dethrone it in the name even of the interests of mankind. I must, then, defend and justify it, and so much the more, because that justification will succeed in revealing to you its equity and its profundity.

Here is the first position maintained against the evangelic law; "You boast," say they to us, "of having labored for the weak against the strong; but if such have been the intention of the Gospel, was it not its duty to put an end to the inequality which reigns here below in the distribution of property? If it be true that justice is the foundation of natural society, one of the chief objects of that justice is the equitable division of property. Now, is property equitably distributed? Are there not men who die of weariness in abundance; and who, after having satiated their passions, no longer know what to do with



the rest, whilst others, and a very great number, pine away in misery, and too often in inanition? Well, what have you, the Gospel, you men of the evangelic law, done against this horrible abuse? What have you done against the rich in favor of the poor? What have you done? You have consecrated the inequality of property; you have sanctioned it; you have placed it under the protection of God and of Jesus Christ; you have declared that some should have all, and that the others should be content to stretch out their hands and receive, under the name of alms, the crumbs which the rich choose to let fall from their tables and their luxury. This is what you have done in a question so grave, which affects the life and death of mankind. We require an account of this from the Gospel, from the Church, from that power which you have exercised during so many centuries, from that new law of which you were so proud, and which has served but to sanctify in property the living source of all injustice and of all misery."

I do not disguise the objection, gentlemen, and shall combat it as frankly as I exposed it to you. But I shall combat it without being wanting in respect to those who occupy themselves about this question; for in the midst of the evils which result from the diminution of truth and of charity upon earth, it is natural to meet with men who are devoted enough to suffer on their account, skilful enough to seek for a remedy, but too little enlightened to keep from losing themselves in the combinations of their intelligence. Others, who are just as far from truth, trouble themselves less about the condition of their fellow-creatures, and pass by these great questions with indifference: I prefer the former, and I combat their errors, respecting, whenever it is possible, the illusions of their devotedness.

God has given the earth to man, and, with the earth,

an activity which fertilizes it and renders it obedient to our wants. The primitive gift constitutes in favor of man a double proprietorship—the proprietorship of the soil and that of labor. The question is not then to know whether proprietorship should be destroyed, since it necessarily exists by the simple fact that man is an active being, and that no one, without God, is able to pluck the land from his hands. But the question is to know to whom property belongs, whether it be a gift made to each of us, or whether, on the contrary, it be an indivisible and social gift, in regard to which no one can make any other claim than for a share of the fruits distributed by society according to certain laws. The tradition sanctioned by the Gospel consecrates property under its individual form; according to this tradition and the Gospel, God is declared to have said to man: “Thou art master of thy labor, for thy labor is thy activity; and thy activity is thyself. To take from thee the domain of thy labor would be to take from thee the domain of thy activity; that is to say, the possession of thyself, of that which makes thee a living and a free being. Thou art then master of thy labor. Thou art also master of the soil, of that portion of it which thy labor may have fertilized; for thy labor is nothing without the soil, and the earth is nothing without thy labor; the one and the other are sustained and quickened reciprocally. When, then, thou shalt have mingled the sweat of thy brow with the earth, and when thou shalt thus have fertilized it, it will belong to thee, for it will have become a part of thyself—the prolongation of thy own body; it will have been enriched by thy flesh and blood, and it is just that thy domain over it should continue, so that it may belong to thee. I have, it is true, a primitive share in it as Creator, but I give it up to thee; and by thus uniting that which comes from Me, and that which comes from thee, the whole is thine. Thy proprietor-

ship will not even end with thy life; thou mayst transmit it to thy descendants, because thy descendants are thyself, because there is unity between the father and his children; and to disinherit these from thy patrimonial lands, would be to disinherit the toils and the tears of their father. To whom else should that land of thy pain and thy blood return? To another who has not labored it? It is better for thee to survive, and for thee to keep it in thy posterity."

Such is, gentlemen, the primitive right consecrated by the evangelic law.

"It is well," they answer us; "but do you not perceive the frightful inequality which will result from that position which is apparently so simple? In a certain time, whether from the incapacity of some, or from infirmity for which man is not accountable, or from other circumstances, favorable for these, unfavorable for those, the land, become too small and limited for its inhabitants, will be found in the possession of a few men, who will consume it in luxury and satiety, to the prejudice of numberless unfortunate beings, reduced to earn their bread day by day, if even so much as the bread necessary for each day be assured to them. Is not this a result which accuses the principle of individual proprietorship? If the consequence be selfish, the principle is inevitably the same. We must then, if we love mankind, have recourse to another distribution of property, and boldly proclaim, because it is a duty, that labor and the land belong to society. Labor and the land form the funds of society, the common property, the very substance of country; we should all devote ourselves to it, and as the only recompense of our efforts, take a part of the fruits proportioned to the merit of our labors. In this way the arbitrary distinction between the poor and the rich would cease; if any irregularity should still exist, it would be due to capacity and

virtue, and not to the chances of birth, which have pounded up together for us, in the same vase, sloth, abundance, pride, selfishness, all vices, and all rights. Have you not yourselves, O men of the Gospel! in your days of holy inspirations, have you not realized that divine republic? When your missionaries founded the famous republics of Paraguay, did you not, in the name of the Gospel, decree the community of labor and of possessions? Was Paraguay any other thing than a united family, in which each member labored for all, all for each, and in which the social power, itself also laboring, distributed the fruits of its peaceful activity to its children, in the most equitable measure? The whole world will admire that creation of the Gospel, which brings back again its primitive times. But, although capable of conceiving and of accomplishing this between two great streams of America, you have not been capable of establishing it as a general law of humanity; you have been without courage, you have retreated before human egotism. And we, the sons of the nineteenth century, trained, it is true, in your schools, and nurtured by the milk of the Gospel, we are obliged to remind you of your mission, and to perfect the law of justice and of charity!"

Again I say, gentlemen, I do not disguise the objection, and I have no merit in so doing, because the reply strikes me forcibly, and appears to me to be perfectly clear. I regard the establishment which is to transfer the domain of the land and of labor to society, as the establishment of universal servitude; and the consecration of an inequality without limit and without resources; such servitude and inequality as no despotism has even approached in imagination.

Society, they say, should be the sole proprietor of the soil and of labor. But what is society? In appearance it is everybody; in reality, when it regards administration



or government, it is always a very limited number of men. Whether society be called monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy, it is always represented and conducted by two or three men, who are called to power by the course of human things, and are made the depositaries of all the social elements. At twenty years of age, men do not believe it; at forty, they no longer doubt it; they know that positive government, in spite of all imaginable combinations, always falls into the hands of two or three men, and that when those men die, their places are invariably filled by others; and so on forever. We know that on this very account it is necessary to oppose to power invincible conclusions, without which society would become lost in an autocracy so exacting that the earth would not be habitable even for a quarter of an hour. Now, property is one of these conclusions, an invincible force communicated to man, which unites his existence of a day to the immortality of the earth, to the power of labor, and enables him to stand erect, with his hands upon his breast, and the soil underneath his feet. Take away from him the domain of the land and of labor, what will be there left but a slave? For there is but one definition of a slave: it is the being who is neither master of land nor of his own labor. Then transfer that double domain to society, that is to say, to certain men who govern and represent society: What will then remain of country but universal servitude, hunger and thirst enrolled under the rod of two or three *quidams*, the scum of all, under a species of haughtiness, the type of which, even after so much of pride, it is impossible to imagine? The citizen will no longer be anything but the *valet* of the republic, and he would not be able, without committing the crime of high treason, even "*to fold his arms together and depart*," as an eloquent man has said; the soil would pass away from under his feet, the sky from above his head, and he



would be left in the glory of being suspended in the void for the greater happiness of himself and of mankind.

Behold, gentlemen, what comes to pass, where property nevertheless exists, but where it is not insured against the will of the sovereign by its inviolability! You anticipate my intention, you name the country to which I allude: well, then, since you know it, have you never felt what a heavy chain its inhabitants drag after themselves, even to the extremities of the world; one which hinders them from breathing the air of freedom under any point of heaven? Have you never met with one of those singular captives, who, laden with all the advantages of birth and of fortune, is nevertheless unable, whatever may be his name, his history, his services, his power, his favor—to say that, to-morrow morning, he will not be wandering upon the highways of Europe, asking alms, excommunicated from his country, having lost his patrimony and his ancestry, despoiled from head to foot, unable even to recognize himself: and for what? Because he might have entertained another thought than that of his master; because he might have prayed to God otherwise than he; and sixty millions of men are in that condition; sixty millions of men listen to their own breathing, fearing lest it may not be in analogy with the respiration of the master; and lest the earth itself, rejecting them from her bosom for so great a crime, may even refuse to them a tomb! See what man is without the proprietorship of land or of labor, and what it is that the Gospel is reproached with not having made of him!

I add, that this universal isolation would not even be compensated for by a certain equality in the common degradation; but that, under no rule whatever, the burden of inequality would but be greater and more intolerable. In effect, whatever distribution may be made of the soil

and of labor, it will be necessary to provide for the wants of society; and those wants beget offices of a nature infinitely varied, from those which are most antipathetic to delicacy and to pride, to those which are most flattering to our inclination for glory and the conveniences of life. The progress of economical science will never efface these native differences between the social offices. Now, in the system which I combat, no one being master of his labor, the choice of it will necessarily belong to the power which represents society; men will not only be slaves in the mass, but also in detail. One will make verses, another will turn the grindstone, and in all cases by the decision of those who are in an elevated position; that is to say, by the will of two or three men ostentatiously called the republic. It is true that the distribution will be regulated by justice—to each according to his capacity. What can be more wise and more natural? It is nature herself who will decide.

I distrust nature very much in the hands of a few men directing the activity of a nation as sovereigns; but, however that may be, let us see the result in regard to equality. To-day I am poor, but I have reasons for consolation: if I have no land, I have intelligence, heart, my devotedness, my faith. I console myself with thinking, that after all, if fate be not unpropitious, I shall be as well able as another to use a pencil or a pen. God has neither given all nor taken away all at once; He has distributed His gifts. But here is another order: all is measured by capacity. My dinner is measured by the amount of my intelligence; I receive with a ration of food an official ration of idiotism. I was poor only by chance, I am so now by necessity; I was insignificant only in one regard, I am so now altogether. The social hierarchy becomes a series of insults; and even a glass of water cannot be drunk in it without the exact shade

of its indignity being visible in its color. In a word, inequality was but accidental amongst men, now it is logical, and universal servitude has, as an alleviation, the domination of intelligent men over the *plebes* of incapacities. This, once more, is what the Gospel is reproached with not having established !

And yet, gentlemen, the men who brought such strange ideas to light were not common men, and many of them even were devoted men ; but everything is possible to those who leave nature in order to emerge from evil, and above all, when they leave the Gospel in the intention of doing better than the Gospel. The community of labor and of possessions is an evangelical idea ; but observe on what conditions. In the first place, it must be voluntary ; and from that moment it has no longer the character nor the inconvenience of servitude. Secondly, in the inequality of the offices there is an act of devotedness ; and then it ceases to be an outrage or an oppression. All the evangelic revolution is founded upon the free conviction of the intelligence, and upon the free concurrence of the heart, and that which it is desired to substitute in its place is a mechanical revolution, having no other origin than a dream, no other force than the law. If its success were possible, the human race would not have fallen from so high a liberty into such abject slavery, nor from so real a state of perfection into a rarer stupidity.

I do not deny that the inconveniences of proprietorship are great ; the abuses which heathen society had made of it called for more than a reform—they called for a total revolution. The rich, being degraded, had degraded the poor, and nothing in common existed between those two decayed but living members of humanity. The rich had no longer any idea they owed something to the poor. They had deprived the poor of all right, all dignity, all respect for themselves ; of every hope, every remembrance

of common origin, and of fraternity. No one thought of the instruction of the poor, none of their infirmities, or of their death. They lived between the cruelty of their masters, the indifference of all, and their own scorn of themselves. This is where Jesus Christ found them : let us see what He has made of them.

There is a proprietorship which is inseparable from man, a proprietorship which he cannot alienate from himself without ceasing to be a man, and of which society should never accept the alienation : this is the proprietorship of labor. Yes, gentlemen, it is possible that you may not attain to the possession of land : the soil is limited ; it has been inhabited for centuries ; you arrive late, and it will perhaps cost you sixty years of the most laborious life to conquer but a small portion of it. This is true. But on the other hand, and as a counterpoise, the proprietorship of labor will always remain to you ; you will never be disinherited in this regard, and the possessor of land cannot even, without your help, obtain from the soil which belongs to him the obedience of fertility. Your labor, if it be not the sceptre of the world, is at least the half of it, and by that equitable distribution, riches will depend upon poverty as much as poverty upon riches. The passage from the one to the other will be frequent ; the condition of both will be to help each other mutually, and to engender reciprocal relations. Such is the present order ; but was it the same before the appearance of the Gospel ? You know that it was not, gentlemen ; you know that slavery was the general condition of the poor ; that is to say, that, deprived of the domain of the land, they were also deprived of all right over their own labor. The rich had said to the poor : " I am master of the soil ; I must take care of thy labor, without which the soil will produce me nothing. The soil and labor are but one. I will not labor, because it fatigues me ; and I will not treat



with thee, because that would be to recognize thee as my equal, and to cede to thee a part of my property in exchange for thy toil. I will not stand in need of thee ; I will not admit that a man is necessary to me to make shoes for my feet, and to cover my nakedness ; thou shalt then belong to me, thou shalt be mine as well as the land ; and as long as it suits me, I shall take care that thou dost not die of hunger."

Probably, gentlemen, this conversation was not held ; but the thing has happened, and is become a general fact. Man perished with the proprietorship of his labor. He descended to the rank of a domestic animal, who guards the house, tills the ground, and to whom they throw his food two or three times a day. No one in ancient times found this bad. Was it, then, a small thing to have established in the world this great principle : Man is never without property ; man, without property, does not exist ; property and personality are all one ? Is not this making a revolution in the principle of property, and a revolution of which no legislation had conceived the idea ? Well ! Jesus Christ has accomplished it ; He has rendered back to man for ever the proprietorship of his labor ; He has made the poor necessary to the rich, by sharing liberty and sources of life with him. No land has ever flourished more than under the hand of the poor and the rich united by a treaty, stipulating by their alliance for the fruitfulness of nature. All of you who hear me, are children of that joyful union ; you owe to it all that you are, all, without exception. Without that unlooked-for change in the administration of property, the greater number of us would be slaves, myself as well as you ; I should not speak to you from this pulpit ; you would not hear the language of right and duty ; and if, by chance, it might reach you or me, we should conceal it as a crime ; we should go into caverns underground, to converse in subdued tones about



the truths which we discuss here in the face of day and by the light of God.

Ungrateful men, who renounce Jesus Christ, and who think you design a greater work than His in attacking property, even that of labor, it is most fortunate for you that the power of the Gospel prevails over your own. Every hour of your dignity and of your liberty is an hour which is preserved to you in spite of yourselves, and which you owe to the power of Jesus Christ. If some day His cross were to sink upon the horizon like a vanished star, the same causes which formerly produced slavery would infallibly produce it again ; the domain of the land and the domain of labor would, by an invincible attraction, fall back again into the same hands ; and poverty, yielding to riches, would present to the astonished world the spectacle of a state of degradation, from which it has emerged only by a miracle perpetually existing before our eyes.

That miracle weighs heavily upon you ; I know it, you even ingeniously ask, in what page of the Gospel slavery has been positively reprov'd and abolished. Great God ! in no one page, but in every one of them. Jesus Christ said not a word which was not a condemnation of slavery, and which did not burst a link of the chains of mankind. When He called Himself the Son of Man, He emancipated man ; when He said : " Love thy neighbor as thyself," He emancipated man ; when He chose fishermen for His apostles, He emancipated man ; when He died for all without distinction, He emancipated man. Accustomed as you are to legal and mechanical revolutions, you ask Jesus Christ for the decree which has changed the world ; you wonder that you do not meet with it in history, in something like this form : " On such a day, at such an hour, when the clock of the Tuileries shall have struck so many times, there will be no more slaves." These are your modern ways of proceeding ; but remark, also, what a denial time

gives to them, and comprehend that God, who does nothing without the free concurrence of man, employs in the revolution which He prepares, a form of language more full of respect for us, and more sure of its efficacy. Saint Paul, being initiated into the patient secrets of the divine action, thus wrote to the Corinthians: "*Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called. Art thou called, being a bondman? care not for it: but if thou mayst be made free, use it rather.*"<sup>1</sup> Those very words were as solemn an act of deliverance as these: "*I, Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my chains . . . and whom I have sent back to thee . . . no longer as a slave, but instead of a slave, a most dear brother.*"<sup>2</sup> The evangelical restitution of man is thus accomplished; it is thus preserved and propagated, by an insensible infusion of justice and charity, which enters into the soul and transforms it without violence, and in a manner which causes that the hour of the revolution is never known. The world, before Jesus Christ, never knew that the proprietorship of labor was essential to man; the world formed by Jesus Christ has known and practised it; this is all.

But the proprietorship of labor is not of itself sufficient for the poor. The infant poor, the sick poor, the aged poor, possess no labor, and but too often even the able poor cannot find work enough. It was necessary, then, for Jesus Christ to create another property than that of labor. Where was He to find this? Evidently it could only be found in the land; but the land belonged to the rich; that right cannot be touched without reducing the whole human race to a state of servitude. What resource was there? Jesus Christ has discovered one, gentlemen;

<sup>1</sup> 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 7, v. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Epistle to Philemon, v. 9, 10, 12, and 16.

He has taught us that property is not egotistical in its essence, but that it may be so by the use which is made of it, and that it is only necessary to regulate and to limit that use, in order to assure to the poor their share in the common patrimony. The Gospel has established this new principle, which was yet more unknown than the inalienability of labor; no one has a right to the fruits of his own domain, other than according to the measure of his legitimate wants. God, in effect, has given the earth to man only because of his wants, and in order to provide for them. Every other use is a selfish and parricidal use—a use of sensuality, avarice, and pride, vices reprobated by God, and which doubtless He has not desired to strengthen and consecrate in instituting the right of property.

It is true that wants vary according to the social position of man, a position infinitely variable, and of which the Gospel has taken notice, in not mathematically regulating the point at which the proper use ends, and the abuse begins. Man would have done this; God did not consider Himself a sufficiently good mathematician for it, or rather, in this as in all the rest, He has respected our liberty. But the evangelic law in this regard is not the less clear and constant; wherever the legitimate want expires, there also expires the legitimate use of property. That which remains is the patrimony of the poor, in justice as in charity; the rich are but depositaries and administrators of it. If selfish calculations deceive them as to their debt towards the poor, if they escape from it by the enjoyment of luxury increasing with their fortune, or by avarice, in growing constantly more unquiet about the future in proportion as they have less occasion for it, woe to them! It is not written in vain in the Gospel: "*Woe to you that are rich.*"<sup>1</sup> God will require an account from them at the day of judgment; the tears of the poor

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, ch. 6, v. 24.

will be shown to them ; they will see them in the brightness of vengeance, because they would not see them in the light of justice and charity. If they were the legitimate proprietors of their fortune, they will also be the legitimate proprietors of their damnation.

I do not halt, gentlemen, before those menaces which are so terrible and so often repeated in the Gospel against the unjust withholders of the territorial property of the poor ; for this is but the smallest guarantee of their right. It is not fear which has founded upon earth the second property of the poor, but the unction of Jesus Christ penetrating into the heart of the rich, and blooming there into sacred wheat. From thence come those assiduous attentions of which the ancient world had no idea, those preoccupations of opulence in favor of misery ; those foundations of hospitals and asylums, of almshouses, under every form and under every name ; those ears open to catch every lamentation which renders a new sound, and which calls forth an invention of charity ; those personal visits to garrets and miserable pallets ; those kind words which flow from a fountain of love which is never dried up ; that communion of riches and poverty which, from morn to eve, from the age which ends to the age which commences, mingles all ranks, all rights, all duties, all ideas ; the theatre with the Church, the cabin with the mansion, birth with death, engendering charity even in crime, and drawing forth even from prostitution its tear and its alms.

I admit that a great part of this spectacle is hidden : every eye has not received the gift of perceiving it, and even the eye of God alone knows it all. It is then easy, under this head, at least to a certain degree, to accuse the hardness of the rich, and the powerlessness of Jesus Christ. It is for us Christians, priests of Jesus Christ, who possess the secret of so many good works, to bear witness to



that which we see, without ever ceasing to excite the hand which grows weary, or the heart which forgets its duty. Are there not here, among the young men who hear me, some representatives of that legion of Saint Vincent of Paul, which covers France, and which now numbers brethren in its name and spirit, even in Constantinople and Mexico? Who is there among you who does not see the poor face to face, who does not know how to listen to them, and speak to them? Which of you has not warmed his faith by the tattered garments of misery? Who, ascending in the evening those miserable stairs, and knocking at the door of grief and pain, has not sometimes heard Jesus Christ reply to him from within by a vanquished temptation, and say to him: Well done!

Ah! physical and moral misery are doubtless on the increase in the world: but is it the fault of Jesus Christ, or of those who reject Him? Has the property of unbelief the right to accuse the property of Christianity of weakness? This, lessened by the apostasy of a portion of the evangelic society, does what it can; and the other portion does not even leave to it the free action of charity. It is not then to be numbered amongst present evils; it will not be amongst the evils to come. May the others heal the wounds which they open!

Jesus Christ has rendered back to the poor the proprietorship of their labor, and He has created for them in the superfluity of the rich a second property: but was it enough? You, Christians, who have the sentiment of God, you will say—No. Whilst I have been speaking, you have secretly compared the condition of the rich with that of the poor, and you have said, that, after all, the difference was great, and that some other thing was yet wanting to the work of Christ. You are right. Man has not only need of bread, he wants dignity. He is, by his very nature, a dignity. Who is there among us who does



not feel this strongly ; and who does not aspire to a state of greatness which is capable of satisfying the instinct which he has of it ? We do not deceive ourselves on this point ; we are children of a royal race ; we descend from a place where domination is of right, and it is just that we should feel moving within us the remains of our first majesty. Alas ! in exile, the prince who has lost a throne never loses the recollection of it ; men have remarked a furrow on the brow of all who have been dethroned, a wound of grief which is incurable. Well ! we are of the number of those exiles of exalted race ; to the letter, and in all the rigor of the expression, we are dethroned kings, children of God, destined some day to sit down on the right hand of our Father, and to reign with Him. This being the case, has the poor man the same measure of glory and of power which comes to us ? And can he do without it if he have it not ? Can he live without dignity ? No, a thousand times—No. I do not admit existence without royalty. Now where is the royalty of the poor ? Where is the royalty of that man who performs the most lowly offices for his daily bread ? Where is it ? Where is his crown ? Who will dress it anew and render it back to him ? Who, gentlemen, who ? Jesus Christ ; the Gospel : be assured that they have provided for it.

Behold Jesus Christ : Man restored—Man renewed in glory to render it back to us—He comes ! Humanity which looks for Him is not one, it is divided into two camps ; on the left the rich, on the right the poor, a space between. Jesus Christ descends ; behold Him ! Which way will He go ? He will pass over to the side of the poor, with His royalty and His divinity. "*He is poor,*"<sup>1</sup> cried the Prophet, on seeing Him coming from afar ; and declaring his own mission : "*The Lord,*" said He, "*hath sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor.*"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Zachariah, ch. 9, v. 9.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke, ch. 4, v. 18.

St. John, the precursor, causes Him to be questioned by His disciples: "*Art Thou,*" they asked Him, "*He that art to come, or do we look for another?*" Christ answered: "*Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again.*"<sup>1</sup> Is this all? No; listen attentively! "*The poor have the Gospel preached to them!*" This is the supreme sign; more than giving sight to the blind, more than making the lame to walk, more than cleansing the lepers, more than making the deaf hear, more than raising the dead to life. "*The poor have the Gospel preached to them!*" That is to say, knowledge, light, dignity are restored to that portion of mankind which had entirely lost it. Jesus Christ did not grow weary of uniting Himself with them; and, sweeping splendor and riches aside whenever He met them on His way he exclaimed, with divine tenderness: "*I give thanks to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones.*"<sup>2</sup> In fine, He established between the poor and Himself a bond of union, which will eternally shelter them, and insure to them the respect of all the ages to come: "*Whatever you did to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me.*"<sup>3</sup>

You understand now, gentlemen, the strange charm which is attached to poverty in the eyes of the Christian. If, not being contented with helping the poor and loving them, the Christian aspires to be poor himself; if he sell his patrimony in order to distribute it to his suffering brethren; if St. Francis of Assisium renounce his paternal heritage to wander about in the world with a sack and a cord; if Carloman wash the vessels of Mount Cassin; if so many kings, queens, princes, princesses, leave all to

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 11, v. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 11, v. 25.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 25, v. 40.

embrace voluntary poverty, you know the cause—Jesus Christ came down from the highest heaven, made Himself poor; He made of poverty and love a mixture which inebriates man, and to which all generations come and drink in their turn. The poor is Jesus Christ Himself—Jesus Christ, who has loved so much! How shall I pass by the poor without a sensation of respect and love?

O potent philosophers! I see clearly your objection; you will say to me: But all that is purely metaphysical; there is not a degree there which has a shadow of reality. It is true, there are neither legislative decrees there, nor heavy artillery to cause them to be respected, nor even common-sense, if you will have it so; there is in this only a revolution of love—a revolution which is accomplished with nothing. This is precisely that which strikes me most forcibly. O academicians! men of talent, legislators, princes, prophets, listen to me, if you can. Rich humanity trampled poor humanity under foot; I belonged then to poor humanity, and I do so now. In pity, then, cause rich humanity to respect poor humanity; cause the rich to love the poor; cause them to think of the poor; create Sisters of Charity to dress my wounds; Brothers of the Schools to instruct me; Brethren of Mercy to redeem me from slavery—do this, and we will acquit you of all the rest. Jesus Christ has done this, and I love Him because He has done this; He has done this with nothing, and this is why I believe Him to be God. Every one has his own peculiar ideas.

Jesus Christ had a third with regard to the poor; He feared lest they should think themselves unfortunate because of their election to poverty; and He pronounced that adorable saying, which is at the head of all His Gospel: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"<sup>1</sup> You, perhaps, think that this

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. 5, v. 3.

means: Blessed are those who are despised upon earth, because they will be honored in heaven; blessed are those who suffer upon earth, because they will rejoice in heaven; blessed are they who are as nothing here below, because they will be all in heaven! It is true, this is in part the sense of that ineffable saying, but it is not its whole meaning. It says also: Blessed are the poor in spirit, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs from here below; because the unction of blessedness will descend into their soul, will enlarge it, will elevate it above the senses, and fill it even in the midst of bereavement! Jesus Christ by this reveals to us a truth, which is not only of the supernatural order, but which belongs also to the moral order, and even to the purely economical order: that happiness is a thing of the soul and not of the body; that the source of it is in devotedness and not in enjoyment, in love and not in sensuality. Now, devotedness belongs to the poor by birthright; and love, too often refused to the rich, dwells willingly in the simple heart of the artisan, who has never been served nor adored, who has not absorbed all his being in pride, and who, knowing how to give up himself, knows what it is to love and to be loved. The Gospel, in turning man from the earth, and in bearing him back towards the things from within, responded then to a disposition of nature itself. It infused into the poor, with the joys of holiness, the lesser but still desirable joys of the human order. It made happy communities—a rare spectacle in our day, but one which, thanks to God, has not yet disappeared. Have you never, on a Sunday, met the population of a village of Brittany on their way to Church, the old man proceeding with a cheerful step, the young husband having his bride upon his arm, youths and little children bearing to God their vigorous and artless health—all outwardly announcing, from the bald forehead to the forehead of the young virgin,



serenity, noble pride, self-possession in God, security of conscience, and not a shadow of regret or envy? The man of the cabin smiles at the man of the lordly dwelling; respect brings only upon his lips a tinge of contentment, and contentment is but the terrestrial expression of a higher and more deeply-seated sentiment.

Elsewhere, gentlemen, it is no longer the same; envy has furrowed every brow, and lighted up all eyes. How should it be otherwise? Jesus Christ had founded the proprietorship of the poor, their dignity, and their blessedness; you have adulterated them all. You have lessened the property of the poor by the increase of property in the hands of unbelievers, more or less returned to Pagan egotism; you have lessened the dignity of the poor in attacking Jesus Christ, who is its source; you have lessened the blessedness of the poor by persuading them that wealth is everything, and that happiness, the daughter of the purse, is assessed and inscribed in the great ledger of the national debt. You will reap the fruits of your labors. This country has many wounds; but the most grievous of all, perhaps, is that of economy, that rage for material prosperity which precipitates all men upon that lean and sickly prey which we call earth. Return, return to the infinite: the infinite alone is vast enough for man. Neither railways, nor high chimneys for your wonderful steam-engines, nor any other invention, will add an inch to the extent of the earth: even were it as profuse as it is niggardly, as unlimited as it is confined, it would still be nothing but a theatre unworthy of man. The soul alone has food for all, and joy for an eternity. Steer your course to this haven in full sail; give back Jesus Christ to the poor, if you desire to render to them their real patrimony; all that you may do for the poor without Jesus Christ, will but increase their inordinate desires, their pride and their misery.



## THIRTY-FOURTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE INFLUENCE OF CATHOLIC SOCIETY UPON NATURAL  
SOCIETY WITH REGARD TO FAMILY.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

PROPERTY forms one of the bases of natural society, not only because it aids in the preservation and the distribution of life, but also because it is necessary to the maintenance of our dignity and of our liberty. Yet, the heathen world, in turning it aside from this double object, made of it an instrument of misery, of servitude, and of degradation, and you have witnessed the happy revolution which was accomplished in this regard by the evangelic or Christian law. The Gospel has restored to men the inalienable proprietorship of labor, and labor being too often denied to them on account of age or sickness, or other circumstances, it has created for them a second property in the superfluity of the rich, and in the charity of all. By this double provision of the new law, both of which were unknown in ancient times, peace is made between rich and poor humanity, the first aiding the second, the second aiding the first, both blending love with justice, and being content with their lot as far as it is possible here below to arrive at contentment; for, on this point as on many others, gentlemen, you should not lose sight of the fact, that no providence can do all for man; whatever

the law may be, the abuse of it remains possible on account of our liberty and misery by that abuse. All the justice, and all the charity of the Gospel, would be unable entirely to struggle against the effect of our passions, our egotism, our improvidence, our weakness, and of so many other causes by which we prepare under ourselves an abyss of misery and grief. The just man will not always accuse his brethren of the evils into which he has fallen ; he will often accuse himself of them ; and, in proportion as he excuses himself less, he will excuse God the more ; and even were he innocent, he would still comprehend that, not being alone, the faults of others might touch him, and afflict his destiny. The Gospel has liberty for a counterpoise ; it performs only miracles, which do not destroy liberty.

Property being regulated by justice, and purified by charity, all is not yet done. There is another base of natural society not less important ; more important perhaps, if it may be possible to assign exact degrees to the constitutive elements of social order ; I mean family. For human society is not composed of an assemblage of individuals scattered about, stripped of all other knowledge than that of their own personality ; it is a contexture of regular families, which make even of man a society anterior to all other, society of labor, of wealth, of affection, of power, by which man stands erect as a complete being preserving and propagating his life, and parting from this point to enter into a society more vast, to which he bears his collective existence, and of which he asks, in exchange, a participation in larger possessions ; all the extent, all the glory, all the power of country.

I propose to examine to-day that which the evangelic law has done for family. The very nature of the subject will require me sometimes to touch on delicate points ; I hope, in doing so, that I shall remain within the limits consecrated by Christian language, and even by the lan-

guage of that great age of Louis XIV., to which God gave the grace to do well and to speak still better.

Family is composed of three kinds of persons ; the father, the mother, and the child. I shall only speak of the child in an accessory manner, because its destiny depends upon the relations which exist between the father and the mother ; and wherever these relations are just and humane, the condition of the child is good and happy. I withdraw him from the discussion, in order not to complicate it unnecessarily.

According to the tradition committed to the sacred books, God having made man, looked upon him, and saw that he was alone. He caused a mysterious sleep to fall upon him ; and, whilst he slept, placing His hand upon his heart, He took away a part of the natural buckler which protected it, formed of it a new being, and, having awakened him, He presented to him the partner of his life. Man, enraptured, recognized himself in another than himself, and pronounced the first words of love : "*This,*" said he, "*is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh ; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man ; wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife : and they shall be two in one flesh.*"<sup>1</sup>

That saying, gentlemen, or rather that hymn, contains the whole constitution of family, the reciprocal dignity of man and woman, the indissolubility of their union—and that union in only two persons. Dignity first—since woman was taken from man, and she can never be reproached with having been formed of a secondary dust—indissolubility, since by their union, they became two in only one flesh—unity, since that flesh was but that of two.

And if, leaving aside Biblical tradition, we seek in our hearts what are the true relations between man and woman, we shall also arrive at the same conclusions. In

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, ch. 2, v. 23, 24.

effect, the affection the most cherished, the most penetrating, the most amiable, that which contains to the greatest extent the idea of felicity such as we create, is, gentlemen, weighed by the balance of the heart, as by the balances of the sanctuary, the affection which unites man to his legitimate consort. Now, wherever there is affection, there is a communication of dignity; affection has never injured, it honors, it respects, it venerates, it raises up that which is lowly to transform it into itself. It is even one of the dreams of our souls, to love those who are beneath us, that we may enjoy the pleasure of raising them even to ourselves; a delicate sentiment, which God Himself feels, and which explains to us all that He has done for man. An ancient writer has said: *Amicitia pares invenit vel facit*: a maxim of daily application, and which diminishes the severe regularity of ranks to the profit of happiness. Now, above all, it applies to woman, who naturally occupies the highest dignity, because the love which we bear to her is the highest of all. I say we, gentlemen, for even those who are appointed to the dignity of the priesthood and to eternal chastity, have a mother, a sister; and consequently they are not excluded from the hallowed affection of which I speak—the gift of God to all men, and the sacred condiment of the whole life.

In the second place, affection naturally produces indissolubility. Who is the being base enough, when he loves, to calculate the moment when he will love no longer? Who is the being unworthy enough to conceive and to merit affection, who lives with that which he loves as if he should, some day, love it no longer? Which of us, on the contrary—an illusion too often destroyed, but an illusion which honors us—which of us, when he once loves, does not believe, at least in that moment, that he will love always with all the ardor and all the youthful-



ness of his heart? I admit that very many deceive themselves; but this is not the less the innate character of every serious attachment.

Unity is another of these. We do not love by threes; but by twos. It is impossible to imagine an affection of the same nature and of the same strength, existing between three souls. It is even on this account that we possess so little capacity for loving. Our love is exclusive; when we give ourselves, we give ourselves but to one; and it required all the power of Jesus Christ to communicate breadth to our affections without destroying their energy.

So, then, the heart and the Bible say the same thing to us, and on no other point are they more in agreement; they tell us that the relations between man and woman are those of dignity, indissolubility, and unity.

But when, leaving the heart and the Bible, we enter upon history, is this the spectacle which is there presented to us? Do we find there, in the relations between man and woman, dignity, indissolubility, unity? No, gentlemen, we find quite the reverse. Man, historically speaking, has accumulated against his helpmate every charge that he could imagine—of dulness and of incapacity. He has made a captive of her; he has covered her with a veil; hidden her in the most secret recess of his house, like a mischievous divinity, or a suspected slave. He has stunted her feet from her infancy, in order to render her incapable of moving, and of carrying her heart whither she would: he has subjected her to the most painful labors—like a servant: he has refused her instruction and the pleasures of the mind, to that point that in certain countries, on the traveller meeting that degraded being and asking his way, she answered: “I know not, I am but a woman.” What have they not done against her? They have taken her in marriage



under the form of a purchase and a sale; they have declared her to be incapable of succeeding to her father and mother, incapable of making a will, incapable of exercising the tutelage of her own children, and have caused her to return herself in tutelage on the dissolution of her marriage by death. In fine, the study of the divers heathen legislations is a perpetual revelation of her ignominy; and more than one of them, pushing defiance even to extreme barbarity, have forced her, full of youth and vigor, to follow the corpse of her husband, and to immolate herself on his burning pile; so that, remarks a jurisconsult, the life of the husband may be in safety, the wife knowing that she could in no case survive him.

What injuries, gentlemen, what amazing degradation! And this is not all. Although dishonored by so many outrages to her weakness, the power of repudiating her has been added. She came young and beautiful; she is turned away, withered by age or by infirmity, like a piece of furniture broken and damaged by age, or which has become an unsightly object in the house. The Latin satirists have preserved for us some of those scenes of infamy, even to the insolent language of the slave coming to tell his mistress of yesterday, that she was no longer even a slave like himself.

And yet much more: simultaneity in marriage; flocks of those beings so worthy before God and before our hearts, flocks of women penned up like beasts between four walls, and become in the weariness of their days and nights the prey, I will not say of an affection, but of a moment amidst ages of oblivion!

Such is history! such is the condition of woman in history!

And, the Gospel come, the Gospel having lifted her up, as we shall soon see, infamy and servitude have not in

any degree ceased to be her fate ; they have only ceased where the Gospel has prevailed ; elsewhere, in every place, she has remained in the condition which we might call her natural lot. You have proof of this not far from you.

Has the Mussulman, who came six centuries after the Gospel, been solicitous to render to woman her proper dignity ? At your very doors, as if to brave you, he has reared the four walls of captivity and contempt ; he has accumulated there the objects of his base lust, not all of them, perhaps, marked by the same degree of shame and servitude : but what matters the shade of esteem in scorn, or the degree of favor in oppression ? The Sultana reigns as much as it is possible to reign over a heart which divides itself, and seeks only to be amused ; she reigns in a manner which the lowest peasant-woman in France would not stoop to. The spectacle of Mahometan morals, among nations which have no lack of native grandeur, is a warning of Providence to the Christian woman, who may be tempted into apostasy by the severity of the Gospel : she learns there the price of that love which is not under the protection of God, and what the adoration of man becomes on the morrow of the day in which he no longer adores Jesus Christ. She learns there the degree of baseness to which she descends when the hand of Jesus Christ is no longer upon man to restrain him and to purify him, to restrain and purify his partner, and render them both a sanctuary of faithful and respectful love.

Even among ourselves, gentlemen, what do we hear as soon as the evangelical waters lower a little ? The hollow cry of divorce, the human animal who yells after brutal liberty, and asks to be set free from a duty which is insufferable to his desires. We have heard this shameful cry ; it has even triumphed for a moment in our country, it triumphs still in a part of Europe where Christianity is badly defended by schism and heresy. There, a wife, a

Christian wife, sees herself driven from the family which she has founded with her blood ; she ceases to be a mother on ceasing to be a wife ; they take away from her by a divorce, as a herd of cattle is divided, a part of the children whom she bore in her womb, whom she nourished with her tears and her love. But, in the deep forests, when they take away from the she-wolf her young, they inflict upon her an injury which she resents ; and you, in a Christian country, you tear away the child from its mother ; you do not fear to inflict an injury upon her for which the tiger would not forgive you in the wild caves of the deserts !

How shall we explain so strange an overthrow of the laws of nature and affection ? I understand the abuse of property—slavery. The slave is a stranger ; he fell into that condition by the chances of war or of birth ; he has no place in the recollections of his master and in his heart. But the companion whom man has chosen, who has received the vows of his youth, who is his equal by blood, who has lived by his hearth, to whom he has unbosomed his heart, who has given to him days which are engraven in his memory, and sons who have grown up under his eyes—why should she be dishonored ? What has she done ? What advantage, then, does man gain by it ? Ah ! what does he gain, gentlemen ? I will tell you ; for it is very necessary to know the cause, after having seen the phenomenon ; it is very needful to penetrate into the heart of man, and to explore all its corruption, so that the evangelic restoration might appear to us in the fulness of its reality.

Three kinds of egotism have, in the heart of man, combined to degrade woman. The first is the egotism of jealousy. It is true, we love ; but we are so insignificant to be loved, years pass away so quickly, they carry away so rapidly the charms of our youth, that a moment arrives

in which we doubt of ourselves, and of our aptness to merit affection. We do not deceive ourselves. Yet we desire to retain that which no longer comes to us of itself; we aspire to a passion which is already far from us; rather than obey nature, we would do violence to it, and resuscitate by slavery that which is taken from us by liberty. This is the secret reason which has everywhere condemned woman to an isolation more or less complete.

Another kind of egotism, that of weariness, has labored against her in another sense. We grow weary. One day we awake as from a dream; we wonder that we no longer love that which but yesterday we still adored; we ask ourselves, why? Nothing is changed but the heart, but the heart is changed, and it is a shock from which it never recovers. What is to be done? How is it possible to live in the pain of beholding with indifference the object which before we looked upon with joy? The dissolution of marriage is the answer of our inconstancy to this question. Jealousy made woman a captive, weariness expels her.

There remains a third part for a third form of egotism, which is that of simultaneousness. The wooing of ourselves is so subtle, that we require sometimes, in order to have all our pleasures, to join habit to novelty. It is attained by the multiplication of marriage; and passion thus forms for itself a court where remembrance is as active as caprice, where all times are mingled together, and where each day brings round an inexhaustible inconstancy, new nuptials, and a divorce.

Such is man; and this triple egotism becomes reduced to one single form, which is that of failing to love. This is the reproach of Saint Paul to the heathens, when, after having enumerated all their crimes, he ends by accusing them of having been *without affection*.<sup>1</sup> Purely human

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Romans, ch. 1, v. 31.



love is a passing effervescence, produced by causes which have in themselves but little duration ; it is born in the morning, and vanishes in the evening. It is not the act of a man who is master of himself, sure of his will, and carrying the energy of duty even into the intimate enjoyments of the heart. True love is a virtue ; it supposes a soul constant and resolute, which, without being insensible to fugitive gifts, penetrates even to the immutable region of the beautiful, and discovers in the very ruins a blooming which touches and retains it. But the Christian soul alone possesses this creating faculty ; the others halt on the surface, and see death on all sides. Two young persons approach the altar in that beautiful ceremony of marriage ; they bring with them all the joy and all the sincerity of their youth ; they vow to each other eternal love. But very soon the joy diminishes ; fidelity totters, the eternity of their vows crumbles away little by little. What has happened ? Nothing ; hour has followed hour ; they are what they were, save an hour in addition. But an hour is a great deal without God. God entered not into their vows ; He was not an accomplice in their love, and their love ends, because God alone is without end.

Let us turn from this side, and after so many sad spectacles, let us see what God has done by the Gospel for the re-establishment of woman in her rights and privileges.

The Gospel has rendered back to woman liberty, instruction, all the civil rights. But it has, in addition, created for her three offices, which give to her a glorious action upon the destinies of mankind. The first is the office of respect. Respect is a mild and pious fear. When we meet with a man charged with years of service, his forehead covered with the living traces of virtue, we feel ourselves, although his equal, struck by a sentiment which causes us no pain, but which, however, takes from us the confidence of familiarity ; this is respect. Respect is the



voluntary admission of a dignity which commands us, without needing to give us any order; it enters, like a necessary condiment, into all the relations of men with each other, and the most tender affection does not exclude the expression of respect, however softened it may become in its hand. Without respect, man falls back to the coarseness of barbarism; he loses sight of the royalty which is within him. Respect, gentlemen, has descended upon us from God Himself, who has made us in His own image. In God, it becomes a majesty which would be repulsive if it were quite alone; but that supreme majesty was united to a supreme degree of benevolence, and from this ineffable mixture there results a physiognomy which attracts without losing any of its grandeur. It is a reflection of this which rests upon us, and which produces respect.

Now, gentlemen, we are apt to forget or neglect that part of our celestial dotation. The abuse of equality, the degradation of vice, the indelicacy of the intelligence, urge us constantly towards coarseness and brutality, as pride induces us to assume a stupid and ridiculous stiffness. It was needful that Christian civilization should find and preserve the secret of dignity tempered by grace, have of it an existing interpreter—a precious and inviolable model the presence of which should be a lesson, and should constantly recall us to the physiognomy of the true, pure, sincere, and simple man, of the man worthy of himself; it is to the Christian woman that this sacred office has been confided. The Gospel has made of the slave a queen; it has lifted her up from a state of shameful bondage, or one of licentious liberty which was but another kind of slavery, to give to her a modest and sovereign action upon public morals. A sceptre borne with as much fruit as glory, and which has stamped upon modern times an indelible color of propriety and of elevation.

That young man grown weary in vice, who no longer

believes in anything, not even in pleasure, who no longer respects anything, not even himself, approaches and meets the regard of the Christian woman ; he sees, living before him, the dignity which he has profaned ; he finds God again in a soul which has preserved its *sacerdoce*, and which is revealed in her features ; he feels his misery and his abject condition before that mirror of purity. A movement of her eyelid, or of her lips, is sufficient to chastise and humble him to the dust—the very man who felt sure that he should not tremble before God ! He acknowledges a power to which he owes an account of his life, before which his shame at least must be disguised ; and if he become incapable of being touched by that tacit reproach, if he despise woman, after having slighted all the rest, it is the last trait of his condemnation ; he no longer appertains to civilized society, he is a barbarian.

The second office which the Gospel has created for the Christian woman, is that of education.

To whom should man, on rising into life, be confided ? To whose charge should he be given, that he may be inspired with sentiments of good ? What hand is sufficiently delicate, sufficiently ingenious, sufficiently tender, to make that wild animal tractable which is just born between good and evil, who might be a wicked sinner or a saint ? Let us not seek so far. Already his education has commenced, even in the womb which bore him. Each thought, each prayer, each sigh of his mother, was a divine nourishment for him, which flowed even to his soul, and baptized it in honor and holiness. The father is powerless directly to influence him in this stage of his being. To the mother alone it has been given, that her soul during nine months should touch the soul of the child, and impose upon it predispositions to truth, gentleness, goodness, the culture of which precious germs she should complete in the light of day, after having sown

them in the unknown mysteries of her maternity. The infant appears ; he escapes from that first education of the Gospel by the bowels of his mother ; but he is received into the hands which the Gospel has blessed ; he no longer has to fear murder or exposition ; he sleeps tranquilly under the guardianship of his mother, armed by Jesus Christ. And as soon as his eyes open, what is the first look which meets them ? The pure and pious regard of a Christian woman. And as soon as a word, gliding through the tortuous channels of the hearing, can be introduced to his intelligence, who will be the first to pronounce it ? Who will convey to him the first word, the first revelation, the first cry of one intelligent being to another ? Who ! It was once God, it is God still, by our purified and sanctified mother. The Christian woman has succeeded to God in the sacred ministry of the first word. When Adam heard it, and when the flame of his mind was kindled by that action, beneath the resplendent horizon of heaven, it was God who had spoken to him. And when our heart awakens to affection, and our minds to truth, it is under the hand, under the language, under the influence of maternal love, that the prodigy is accomplished.

Infancy very soon disappears, and youth announces itself with its instincts of liberty. Education becomes more perilous, without ceasing to be necessary ; all authority weighs upon us as a yoke. One alone remains, if not intact, at least respected. We still listen to truth from the mouth of a mother loved by God ; her regard has not lost all authority ; her reproach is not without a sting to cause remorse ; and when it is quite disarmed, her tears remain to her as a last authority, which we do not resist. She discovers and lays open for herself within us, paths which lead to the most secret recesses of our heart, and we wonder to find her there at the very moment when we

had thought ourselves quite alone. A singular virtue, outliving even itself, and which shows in its very last traces from what efficacious sources God has tempered it !

When the mother finishes, the wife begins. Man is master in his turn, but his magistracy does not exclude that which he gives over himself, and his heart obeys so much the more perfectly as his thought commands with an empire which is not disputed. The fire of his youth is abated ; man no longer wishes for independence as a gift which surpasses all others, and which places him in possession of himself ; he is sufficiently master of himself, he is sure of his power, he returns towards the gentleness and the charm of infancy by the bent of his inclination and the very influence of life. Friendship is wanting to him, he has no longer any equals : and who does not want equals ? Who does not feel the want of some one sufficiently tender to command, devoted enough to speak truth to him ? Man asks this from his wife, after having received it from his mother ; he seeks after authority as much as he for a moment feared it. At least he accepts it without resistance, because love is its foundation, and because he derives from it the consolations of each day against the troubles of maturity. For life becomes severe on declining towards its evening ; deceptions abound, the light of things grows pale ; cares furrow the brow ; and ambition itself, tired of success, gives forth that cry of deceived vanity :

" Mon cœur, lasse de tout, demandait une erreur  
Qui vint de mes ennuis chasser la nuit profonde,  
Et qui me consolât sur le trône du monde."

Now, who can impart that error sought for, if it be an error, but the wife ? It is she who colors the happy events, who embalms reverses, who receives at the domestic threshold the fugitive from honors, all wounded by his



fall, and proscribed by his thoughts; who has brought back from science only the martyrdom of doubt. The Christian wife infiltrates into those depressed souls, disengagement from earthly pursuits, and confidence; she resuscitates in their souls the God who gladdened their youth, and invigorates their dying life with the sources of eternity.

If grace fail her for that last scene of human education, all is not lost; all the transformations of the Christian woman are not yet completed. After having been mother, then wife, the Christian woman is reproduced under a new form—that of a daughter! And what man, at sixty years old, does not learn of his daughter? Where is the man who, not having known God in his life and reason, and seeing his young child kneeling every evening before the invisible Majesty, does not suspect, by the ingenuousness of her prayer and of her joy, by the peace of her heart, that something mysterious draws near to him by so living a representation. Oh! the tenderness of the ways of God! Our mother taught us His name when we were infants; the wife repeated it, in the nuptial intimacy, to the soul, steeped in happiness, of the young man; the daughter speaks of it to the old man bent by age, and brings back, in his declining days, a revelation full of youth and freshness! Heaven will declare how many souls have been the fruit of that last violence of truth; how many who had seen and heard nothing, have been awakened from their dream of error on their death-bed, and have, with their expiring breath, adored eternal love presenting itself to them in the angelic form of a tenderly-loved daughter.

After this, what need has woman of a third office? God, however, has committed to her a third; shall I say the most important of all? I know not, but I will name it—it is the ministration of charity.



To the Christian woman, by a special delegation, as an employment of her leisure and of the superabundance of her virtues, all the poor, all the miseries, all the afflictions, all the tears have been confided. It is she who, in the name and in the stead of Jesus Christ, has to visit the hospitals and the garrets, to discover the groanings and lamentations, to explore the vast domain of grief. To others belongs the devotedness of doctrine, to her it is given to succor and to help. To others it belongs to represent Jesus Christ by the glave of the Word, it is for her to represent Him by the glave of Love.

Shall I, without enlarging upon this subject—for there would be too much to say—shall I bring before you a comparison which will say all in one word? Well, there is the same difference between the heathen and the Christian worlds, as between the priestess of Venus and the Sister of St. Vincent of Paul. Go to that famous temple of Corinth, and contemplate woman; enter our hospitals, and behold there the Sister of Charity! There are the two worlds; choose between them.

That done, gentlemen, what remains is as nothing. The dignity of woman created, the indissolubility and the unity of marriage flowed naturally from it. Yet, so much is man corrupt, the indissolubility of marriage has only been maintained at the price of long efforts. I might once more cite before the tribunal of the present age, on the one hand the passions of the great, and on the other the intrepid pastoral spirit with which the chiefs of the Church have maintained the purity and the dignity of European blood. I might, resuming history in another sense than that in which it has been taught to you, tell you what we have suffered for you, and what you would have become, if the immovable barriers of Catholicity had not obstinately been opposed to those ungovernable beings whose power equalled their inordinate desires, and

who, weary of the morals of Christ, rushed to the conquest of heathen or Mahometan liberty. We have made of that cause the entire cause of civilization, because it was the cause of woman—that of your mothers, of your wives, of your daughters—and with them the cause of the human race. You have not comprehended it. You have accused us of overstepping the limits of lawful defence; of extending our hand to the crown, when we did but extend it upon the brutality of flesh and blood. Where would you have been without these struggles? Your blood, stained during centuries, would have reached you through the veins of a female slave, instead of from the heart of a guileless wife. All the holy joys which you have experienced through your mothers, your wives, and your daughters, would have been transformed into the infamous joys of slavery steeped in sensuality. You would have been Turks, and not Franks.

Let us give thanks to God who has saved us by the courage of our fathers, and by the sole means with which courage could then arm itself. Divorce being driven from the Christian world, simultaneous living has not made an effort at existence. What European (for I do not call the Turk planted at Constantinople an European) dares even to dream of the profanation of marriage by establishing simultaneous living? Who would not blush, even in the very midst of debauch, to introduce under the same roof, by the same oaths, the multiplied captives of his most ignoble and senseless egotism?

Once more, let us give thanks to God who has purified the human race without withdrawing its liberty, who has brought to confusion the complicity of the laws, and permitted purity to become the authentic rule of human society.

This work has not been accomplished by slight efforts. Jesus Christ has not limited Himself to placing it under the protection of His cross. He has willed to give to the

world a woman at the same time virgin and mother, an ineffable model of maternal and of virginal devotedness, existing for ever under the eyes of the world, to inspire it, by the admiration of her virtues, with the practice of holy morals. Woman has not ceased during eighteen centuries to regard that sublime type, which is that of her regeneration; she has derived therefrom the double courage of chastity and love; she is become worthy of the respect which the world needed to have for her; her oaths have been believed; and the veil of servitude, in falling from her brow, has revealed there, under the antique appearance of fragile beauty, the immutable and bloody sign of the cross. Protected by that sign, she has passed along our streets as an apparition of decency and goodness; she is made happy in the sanctuary of home; she has retained there her husband, her sons, and her daughters; she has there received the stranger without wounding her honor: family is become the abode of peace, of joy, of uprightness, the chosen place of every soul who is not corrupt. The honoring of the affections has succeeded to the honoring of flesh and blood. I fearlessly ask you: Who among you does not know, and does not feel, that there is more contentment in a quarter of an hour passed in the bosom of his family, by the side of father, of mother, of brothers, and sisters, than is to be found in all the intoxications of the world? Who does not make of family the dream of his existence? Who has not said to himself when young: Some day, after long toil, I shall be able to sit down in my own house; I shall have a table, a cabinet, and all the objects of my affection around me? All of us, young as we were, have said this to ourselves; and those of us who have renounced the happiness of earth to find in Jesus Christ their unique heritage, said the same before having received the revelation of a rarer possession in a greater sacrifice.

O domestic hearth of Christian nations ! paternal home, where, from our earliest years, we have respired with the light the love of all holy things ; we may grow old, but we return to you with a heart always young ; and were it not eternity which call us on, withdrawing us from you, we should be inconsolable on seeing your shadow daily growing longer, and your sun growing pale !

Let us terminate, gentlemen, by resuming this Conference and the one which preceded it. There are in the world three kinds of weakness : the weakness of destitution, which is the poor ; the weakness of sex, which is woman ; the weakness of age, which is the infant. These three kinds of weakness form the strength of the Church, who has allied herself with them, and has taken them under her protection by placing herself under theirs. This alliance has changed the face of society, because, until it was formed, the weak was sacrificed to the strong, the poor to the rich, woman to man, the infant to all. The Church, in uniting herself to weakness against those who have attained to the threefold power of patrimony, of virility, and of maturity, has re-established in an equilibrium all rights and duties. Egotism, however, does not consider itself vanquished ; it seeks, in a manner more or less disguised, to re-establish the heathen order upon the ruins of the Christian order ; that is to say, the oppressive domination of strength over weakness. Will it succeed ? Will it be able to burst the bond which retains the poor, the woman, and the infant, in the unity of the Church ? I am sure that it will not ; for, under the feeble hands which I have just named, there is the hand of God, the hand of Jesus Christ, the hand of the blessed Virgin Mary—all the powers of reason, of justice, and of charity.



## THIRTY-FIFTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE INFLUENCE OF CATHOLIC SOCIETY UPON NATURAL  
SOCIETY WITH REGARD TO AUTHORITY.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

WE have proved the influence of Catholic society upon natural society with regard to general right, with regard to property and to family; and we have seen that, under these three fundamental relations, Catholic society had exercised a healthy action upon natural society, by creating in it an efficacious protection of the weak against the strong. But there is another element of human society in which it is no longer only a question of protecting the weak against the strong, a complex element in which is found sometimes a superabundance of strength, sometimes a superabundance of weakness; I mean authority. Authority possesses the peculiar character of being by turns that which is most strong and that which is most weak, with the power on a certain day to crush everything, and on the morrow to be trampled underfoot; so that its whole history in this world reduces itself to that saying of a famous orator: "There is but one step from the Capitol to the Tarpeian Rock." The Capitol intoxicates, the Tarpeian Rock humbles; and authority oscillates between these two limits, which are equally disastrous to it. It is necessary to defend it against the one and the other, and



to insure to it, between these two shoals, the honor of duration and the empire of stability. Let us see what natural society has been able by itself to accomplish towards the establishment of that equilibrium, and the aid which it has received from Catholic society to produce the necessary effect.

Thus far, gentlemen, I have marched upon hot ashes; to-day I shall have to tread upon burning coals. I do not shrink from it. I have difficult things to say; I shall declare them with as much forbearance as frankness, but I shall declare them.

No society can be conceived without unity, without order, without power. By the effect of unity, millions of men of divers interests, passions, ideas, times, and places, meet in one unique centre, and move as if there were for them but one time and place, but one idea, one passion, one interest, one life. By the effect of order, the mutual relations of citizens, as they are defined by the laws, are maintained with inviolable regularity; and if, here and there, in the fluctuating shadow of the social masses, some evil-doer applies himself to attacking recognized rights, the spirit of order, which is in the society, arrests him, and obtains justice against him. By the effect of power, the citizens, who are dispersed over a vast territory, remain tranquil, unmindful of the enemy. Not one of them, so to say, is at the frontier; and behind that rampart, which appears not to be defended, all sleep in peace, because there is somewhere a power which watches, which, even in the silence of night, has its ears open upon its solemn couch, and, by one single motion of its lips, will magically transport an army to face the enemy, in which the courage, the fortune, and the majesty of the country will be found.

This, gentlemen, is society, such as unity, order, and power have made it. But who will give to it this unity?

Who will create for it this order and this power? We must always come to a few men, and generally to a single man, in whom resides and is accumulated power, order, and unity. And judge! Thirty millions of men breathing in one single breast, stamped upon one single face, and confiding to it all their strength, with all their glory and all their destinies! But how can a man, how can several men firmly appropriate to themselves such grandeur, and continue it from one age to another, always subsisting, always equal to the wants of society; passing with the same character from the brow of a hero to the brow of an infant, from success to reverse, and charged to form, with the fragility of a life, the immortality of a nation?

It will perhaps appear to some that nothing is more simple, and that a loyal army, under an able general, possesses, at the points of its lances, the whole secret of durable government. But a loyal army and a brave general, like all other human things, are in the capricious hand of fortune, and history affords high testimony that no government has been less solid than the government of soldiers. By a special providence of God, for which we should render thanks to Him, as soon as the helmet governs, unity, order, and power are mortally affected. After the Roman senate, under its civil toga, had for a long time provided for the stability of the people-king, as soon as the power of the legions succeeded to it, we see only in Rome masters arriving from the Euphrates or the Rhine, and entering by the triumphal arch, only to go out by the common sewer. The people, amused by these sights, beheld the arrival of the newly elect, and applauded him with so much the more fervor, as they already saw upon his brow, through the aureole of the empire, the place reserved for the insult of the morrow.

Military force, so imposing at the first glance, is the

very last which is able to constitute unity, order, and power, because, being more material than spiritual, it is to life what the organ is to the blood; it needs a foreign element to animate and direct it, without which it falls of its own weight like a rock which knows not what it does, or becomes scattered like dust which flies before the wind. Society is not the offspring of violence, it is the offspring of intelligence and liberty, and respects nothing but that which springs from that double source, or takes its mission from them. It is not force which founds society, it is authority.

But what is authority? Authority is a superiority which produces obedience and veneration; obedience first, that is to say, the spontaneous submission of one will to another. "Captain, place your men there, and defend it at the cost of your lives." "Your orders shall be obeyed, general." This, gentlemen, is obedience, and you feel that it is the obedience of a free man, where he who commands and he who obeys are equally great. The one has found it good to require a life for his country, the other has found it good to give it. The one conceived the act of devotedness only because he was capable of performing it himself; the other was capable of performing it only because he conceived it. We see here an action and a reaction of two souls, who appreciate each other at their just worth. When the famous Spartans of the Thermopylæ inwardly prepared themselves to die for the salvation of Greece, they engraved upon a rock this inscription: "Traveller, go and say in Sparta that we died here in order to obey her sacred laws." Here again is obedience, and not an act of obedience carried beyond what is necessary, proper only for certain heroes, but such an obedience as is necessary for the existence of society, such as Sparta possessed in its palmy days. All Sparta spoke at the Thermopylæ, the living as well as the dead;

and there was not a soul in the whole republic which would not have responded to the spirit of the three hundred.

Without the spontaneous submission of the will to another will, and even sometimes of an enthusiastic submission, unity is impossible, and order and power also. For how is it possible for so many separate wills to form but one, if there exist not a sovereign will which concentrates them in itself? How would order be obtained, if all the various wills did not concur by obedience to maintain the relations established by the laws, and constantly menaced by all discontented interests? And how should power exist, if each citizen be not ready, at the first word of command, to take the post to which he is called?

Veneration is another element of authority, which is also as needful to it as obedience; for veneration is but respect mingled with love; and we do not long obey those who neither inspire us with love nor respect. The will finds it difficult to submit, even when it sincerely loves and respects; and if this double sentiment should fail to move it, sooner or later it ceases to obey. Neither necessity nor constraint could provide for this even for a moment, and the first favorable occasion would be the signal at which unity, order, and power would perish with authority. All power which does not produce obedience and veneration prepares but its own dissolution.

But these principles do not carry us very far in the explanation of the mystery which occupies our attention.

If obedience and veneration, in founding authority, are the cause of unity, of order, and power, what is it which is to produce obedience and veneration? I can easily understand that unity, order, and power may be the result of obedience and veneration; but how can one man or many men inspire thirty millions of men with obedience and veneration? This is the mystery. Upon this point



the world, before Jesus Christ, was divided into two systems—the Eastern system and the Western.

The Eastern system consists in this: Man cannot obey man, neither can he venerate man. Man cannot obey man, because each will is as good as another will; and man cannot venerate man, because man is too insignificant before his fellow-man, too equal to him by the infirmity of life and death. Authority, then, must be above man; it must possess an inaccessible character, be enveloped with the prestige of omnipotence; there must be between the subject and the sovereign such a gulf that the eye even should not dare to look beyond it: in a word, authority must be God. The East rested in that fiction, or rather in that reality, the only one which, in its eyes, constitutes power, in rendering it sacred and worthy of veneration. What has resulted from it? Obedience and veneration, I admit; but an abject obedience and veneration, the history of which horrifies us. The East has not chosen to submit to man, esteeming such an act as incomprehensible as degrading; and it has submitted to monsters. For the fiction did not change human nature in the idol which had the profit of it; or rather, by an effect contrary to the object, it changed human nature, in obtaining an empire over it and degrading it. The man bent under the weight of the divinity which was heaped upon his shoulders; and having no bounds to arrest him on any hand, he easily pushed his pride and his immorality even to the point of extravagance.

But did the East, even at this cost, obtain unity, order, power, stability? By no means; the revolutions of nations and dynasties have in no other countries presented a more cruel spectacle, or one of more frequent occurrence. The sovereign races have not been able to take root and find there in this adoration a land propitious to longevity. The burning sun has devoured them. The reason, in fact,



is that nothing ends more quickly than that which has no limits; an hour devours a century in the hands of a prince who can do what he pleases, and who is not God. In vain does idolatry promise eternity, it does not give it, it is the first to snatch it away. A time comes in which society yields under the burden of crowned madness, and then is accomplished that which is implicitly contained in the contract between the nations and the kings of the East, and that which the Comte de Maistre has felicitously expressed in that true sentence: "Do what you will, and when we are tired, we will take off your heads." Rarely have nations failed to put this into execution.

The Western system is quite different from that of the East, more judicious, more true, worthy of succeeding, if man alone could succeed in such great things. The Western nations consent to be governed by man, and consequently to vow obedience and veneration to him; but, nevertheless, they fear him; they fear to place in his hands the sceptre and the sword; they wish him to be great without being too great, powerful, with certain limits, leaving a space between revolt and absolute submission. The West calculates, balances, limits power. It seeks to create between the prince and the people a sort of reciprocal penetration, which might make of both one single spirit, in which the sovereignty has some share in obedience, and obedience some share of the sovereignty. Such were those republics of Greece, governed in their days of glory by citizens drawn on the spur of the moment from the crowd, and exercising power as the proxies and representatives of the community. Obedience and veneration were doubtless produced in this complicated system, but they were insufficiently produced. Its basis was too uncertain and too narrow to give nations all the stability of which they stood in need.

We have a memorable model of this *régime*, and the

most complete of all, in the Roman republic. The Roman senate was the most marvellous assembly which ever governed a people; and we know not whether to admire most in it the spirit of continuity and perseverance, the profundity of its views, the courage under reverses, the national faith, the dignity, the religion, or all those consular men who, after having commanded armies and declaimed at the Forum, carried back to the midst of their community the personal glory which they had merited; thus adding to the majesty of power as much as they had added to the greatness of the people, so that there might be always, between the one and the other growth, an equilibrium which sustained them both. Well, how long did the Roman senate, that profane masterpiece of the Western world, last? Between the dagger which killed Lucretia, and the dagger which killed Cæsar, how many centuries do you count? About five. At the end of that period, having become master of the world, the Roman senate caused it to be said to a captain who was called Cæsar, that he must not pass beyond the limits of his military department. Cæsar reflected for a moment, and passed. At that first act of disobedience everything was said; Rome existed no longer, or if she continued to bear her name, it was but to fall from Augustus to Tiberius, from Tiberius to Caius, from Caius to Nero, from Nero to Heliogabalus, from the obedience of the West to the obedience of the East, and even with exaggeration in the solemnity of extravagance.

This is all which the most wise art, the most fortunate circumstances, the most remarkable simplicity of manners and the greatest success in conquest which has been ever seen, have produced of obedience and veneration according to the Western system. Behold the largest human community which had ever existed, lasting five hundred years! a little more than a third of the duration of the

French monarchy ! There was an insufficiency then of obedience and veneration in this system, and consequently an insufficiency of unity, of order, and power ; in consequence also a social insufficiency.

But what was the cause of those dangerous shoals, so different from each other, upon which the East and the West have made shipwreck ? It is, gentlemen, because in the West, as in the East, there was only man, nothing but man. Now, man alone is incapable of securing obedience and veneration in the measure which is necessary to conduct a community. Man is not enough for so great a work. It may be desired to elevate him beyond his natural sphere, he may be called by the name of God ; it may be said to him : *Your Eternity* ; but he will not be the less a man ; and however great he may chance to be, were he Titus or Nerva, he would have for his heir some illustrious wretch in whom the superhuman fiction would be but an additional defect. Stupefied by this over-measure of honor and power, man yields under it ; he creates for himself within his littleness, a repercussion of that false majesty which changes him into a monster ; and having reached that point, the idolatry which sustains him sinks of its own weight upon itself, and brings down the whole of that foolish edifice in its fall. Dynasties succeed to dynasties, and nations themselves follow the fate of their chiefs. For when power is uncertain and badly based, society itself totters like a drunken man. The cause of sovereignty is the cause of society itself. For this reason, gentlemen, let us not laugh at these cruel catastrophes of kings ; let us not laugh at that state of powerlessness in which humanity finds itself, to produce obedience and veneration to the extent to which they are needed by mankind. It is one of its great misfortunes. For, from obedience and veneration depend unity, order, power, duration, and stability. Let us not so readily crush, under the weight

of our language, destinies to which our own are united. Let us learn to comprehend our own weakness and to regret it. A portion of mankind has chosen gods for chiefs; the gods have perished. The other part has chosen men; the men have succumbed. Being too great or too little, they have sunk by inability, or by excess. What would you? Man had but man.

Should you ever, plebeians as you are, by one of those changes which time brings round, should you ever be called to the government of a nation, do not count either upon yourselves or upon mankind for support. Sooner or later humanity will betray you; obedience and veneration will retire from your work; and you will be astonished to have done so little with so much genius. Woe to you, then, but woe to ourselves also; the evil is common, and this is why we do not triumph over it. Let us rather seek the remedy in Him whom we have already seen so powerful to heal our maladies. Let us see, between that exaggerated strength and weakness of power, what Catholic society has brought to the help of natural society.

Catholic society has laid open in the world two inexhaustible sources of obedience and veneration: the one public, the other secret.

The public source of obedience and veneration laid open by Catholic society is, gentlemen, the authority of its hierarchy. During eighteen hundred years, the papacy, the episcopacy, the Christian priesthood, have been obeyed and venerated by the largest union of men which has existed here below, without ever having had need of force to incline a single head or to bend a single will. Obedience here is free, veneration here is free; each one of the faithful may, at any moment, refuse or retract his homage, and yet that homage exists unalterable and sacred, notwithstanding the vicissitudes of favor or of persecution, notwithstanding the persevering efforts of



the world to blight in its source a love which constrains it, a respect with which it is offended. The Catholic hierarchy, without any other resource than persuasion, causes itself to be obeyed and venerated in a manner such as no human majesty in any time or place has ever obtained. The fact is palpable; it is strikingly visible; it needs no demonstration; it is sufficient to declare it to produce conviction and wonder. But if I needed a demonstration, or rather an example, pass in review what took place here, even at the inauguration of the present century.

We had destroyed everything, even the past; in our hatred of every object of pious honor, we had opened the tombs in which the great servants of the country reposed, disarmed by death and under the sole guardianship of our recollections, and for the sole pleasure of braving majesty, even in the sepulchre, we scattered their ashes to the winds and to the common scorn. Never, in any period of history, had obedience and veneration been further removed from men's hearts. An old man appeared in that time; he was called by a young soldier, who had all the prestige of glory, but who needed to kneel before the vicar of Christ, to receive from that abasement the seal of a higher authority. The old man came armed only with his blessing; he came into the midst of that people who had, in one single day, trampled underfoot all the generations of its kings: he appeared at the windows of the Tuileries. He was no sooner seen, bearing upon his visage much more strongly-marked traces of trouble than of age, but at the very instant, by the magic influence which opens hearts on their good side, all Paris rushed to possess a happiness which they no longer knew—the happiness of venerating and receiving that blessing which, during so many centuries, has caused man to bend the knee. And whilst this scene was pass-



ing without, in a higher region, even within the palace of the Tuileries, a celebrated man who has just expired, touched his neighbor, and said to him, with joy and admiration: "At last, sir, we see an authority! Behold an authority!"

The secret source of obedience and veneration laid open in the world by Catholic society is, gentlemen—confession.

Every man, whatever he may be, prince by power or by intelligence, if he would have any part in the mystery of Christ, in the certainty and the future which are in Him, is obliged to avow his faults on his knees, to ask pardon, and to receive penance for them—an exercise of obedience and veneration which reveals him to himself, purifies him, humanizes and softens without abasing him. For he is free in that action more than in any other; no power is exercised over him but that which he gives by free consent; he can rise and depart, if the truth which he seeks appear to him to be too severe—if the peace and honor of conscience be too dearly purchased at that cost. But he persists voluntarily, when he has once known the charm of humility and of sincerity between God and himself; he learns with joy, in the obedience and veneration which he has chosen, to obey even where he has no choice, to venerate even where God requires him by a command which admits of no choice. That lofty spirit consents to be governed; that savage heart, always ready to revolt, accepts unity, order, and power under the only form in which they are possible—under the form of authority. Confession does not cease to act in this sense from one end of the world to the other, by a secret and perpetual influence, which, joined to the public action of the hierarchy, creates in the human race, if I may be allowed so to speak, an enormous amount of obedience and veneration, but of spontaneous obedience

and veneration, which are the effect of conviction, and which render man sociable in consoling and elevating him.

Now, it is impossible that the reaction of such a creation should not be felt in purely natural society, and not have modified in natural society, in a remarkable manner, the reciprocal relations of the subject and the sovereign. Evidently, gentlemen, some great transformation should have been operated here ; you wait for me to show it to you, and you do not wait in vain. The Catholic spirit has produced in the world, even with regard to human authority, something altogether new, altogether unknown to antiquity, the middle term between the Western and the Eastern systems : it has produced the Christian monarchy. And what was the Christian monarchy ?

The Christian monarchy had in each country an unique chief, the centre and means of unity, of order, and power. This chief sprang from the heart of society, by a natural appearance and growth, as the oak springs from a germ which develops itself with time. Nothing harsh or violent was felt in his origin, whatever might have been the manner or occasion of it ; and whatever happened, the principle of obedience with regard to him was not contested. Men could, and ought to refuse to obey him in certain cases, when the command was unlawful ; that is to say, contrary to the law of God and the law of the country. The law of God and the law of the country formed the double limit of the sovereignty ; but in resisting, in order to defend them, neither the general right of commanding, nor the duty of obeying, was disputed. Veneration joined itself to obedience to make of the Christian chief a father as well as a magistrate. Respect and love mutually sought him, and, from the heart of his people to his own, there was a reciprocal effusion of which the antique monarchies had not even a suspicion. The people pardoned the faults of the prince, as the child par-

dons the weaknesses of his father; they showed as much indulgence for the leaven of humanity which existed in him, as for that which formed part of the lowest of mortals. In fine, all their sentiments were expressed in one final sentiment, which was the first foundation of the Christian monarchy, and which was called fidelity. The sovereign had confidence in his people, and the people had confidence in their sovereign. They believed in each other; they joined their hands, not for a day, but before God and for ever, in the name of the dead and of the living, in the name of ancestry and posterity. The prince descended peacefully into the tomb, leaving his children under the guardianship of his people; and the people beholding the children young, and without power, protected them until the time came when they should be protected by them.

Honor was the second sentiment upon which the Christian monarchy reposed; a newer sentiment and even more unknown in antiquity than the preceding one. Honor was an elevated regard of the Christian upon himself, a sensation of his own nobility. By honor, the Christian approached his master; he had more than rights with regard to him; he caused his own personality to exist before him with infinite delicacy, which was the thing the most respected in the world in a time when so many others were respected. Honor protected all, and saved all. It exercised, particularly in France, an influence almost sovereign, which caused Montesquieu, a person but little suspected, if I mistake not, to say that France was a monarchy governed by honor.

Shall I give you some examples which will cause you to feel the difference between the Christian sovereignty and the ancient sovereignty? I will not even choose them from the best epochs, but from the epoch in which the Christian monarchy inclined towards its setting.

Louis XIV. mixed with his court in those apartments at Versailles, which henceforth painting alone is considered great enough to occupy; some one had spoken of the Shah of Persia, and of I know not what execution he had made of the great men of his kingdom. The king said: "This is to reign!" "Yes, Sire," replied the Duc d'Estrées, who had been ambassador in Persia; "but I have seen three of them strangled in the course of my life."

Under Louis XV. a minister was disgraced. On the morrow the king left his chamber, and finding the *salons* deserted, he asked of a servant: "Where is the court, then?" "Sire," answered the servant, "the court is at Chanteloup." Chanteloup was the country house of the disgraced minister, and was forty leagues from Versailles. In those days, gentlemen, men travelled forty leagues to visit disgraced ministers; there are times in which they do not walk four steps for the same object.

Permit me to relate yet another anecdote.

The king Louis XVI., of painful and venerable memory, made a journey in Normandy. A peasant woman approached him, and asked permission to kiss his hand. "And why not my cheek?" replied the monarch.

Such, gentlemen, in the Christian monarchy, was the familiarity of the great and the poor with the sovereign. Obedience and veneration were become changed into fidelity tempered by honor. They were far removed from the manners and customs of Asia, and not less far from those of Greece and Rome. All was new, like the Church, or like Jesus Christ, from whom those delicate relations proceeded.

I add that liberty was also an element of the Christian monarchy.

Every one knows of the labors of the Church for the maintenance of the rights of conscience under that rule.



She has, doubtless, met with great obstacles there : because, in the free-will of man, and in the accumulation of human things, evil has always the means of making itself visible. But the Christian monarchy, considered in the divers elements which constitute it, has not the less lent its aid to the evangelic law, and assured its reign in favor of the weak during a long period. Each Christian country had also its laws, its immunities, its associations defended against arbitrary power by a common force placed at the service of the poorest and the most humble, and which gave to them, with more regularity in life, a greater amount of dignity. No one was then alone ; no one found himself alone and disarmed in presence of the whole of society, or of those who represented it. In other times the name of liberty, has been easily made to decorate the moral disarming of the weak ; the future will declare, still better than the present, on which side there was the more of justice and of real freedom. But, from this day, I have a right to conclude that, under the Christian monarchy, liberty was assured ; and that, in order to define that institution, we must say, completing that phrase of Montesquieu : The Christian monarchy was a monarchy governed by fidelity, honor and liberty. It is possible, gentlemen, that you may have forgotten these things ; but history has not forgotten them, and will some day proclaim them loudly.

How was this transformation brought about ? How was it that power became at the same time divine and human ? For this was its double character ; it was obeyed and venerated as divine, and yet in principle it was human. It was superior and equal, father and brother at one and the same time. By what secret agency was it conducted to that point of perfection, so far removed from the Eastern and from the Western systems ? I will tell you in a few words.



The Gospel had established this principle, that man is too great to obey man ; that man is too miserable to be venerated by man, by his own substance, and his own virtue. This principle overthrew the Eastern system. But, in return, the Gospel has said that it was needful to obey God in man : “ *Servientes sicut Domino et non hominibus.*”<sup>1</sup> This principle overthrew the Western system. The prince was no longer the proxy of the people, he was the proxy of Jesus Christ ; men no longer obeyed only man, but Jesus Christ Himself, present and living in him whom society had elected. I say, in him whom society had elected ; for the Gospel had not withdrawn from society its natural right of election ; it had not even determined whether the form of government should be a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy. It left the question of form and of choice to the course of experience and of events ; it said to nations : “ Place at your head a consul, a president, a king, whoever you please ; but remember, that as soon as you have seated your supreme magistracy, God will enter into it. Power springs up by a natural germination, as the flowers spring up in a field, not all with the same crown and the same color ; the great affair is not the birth of power, it is above all consecration of it. When, then, from the bosom of a nation, power shall have sprung up by a natural growth, as a palm-tree springs up in Lebanon, I, Jesus Christ, will descend under its shadow, I will enter under its bark, I will be its sap, its life, its glory, its strength, its duration ; you will have produced it, I will consecrate it. You will have produced it mortal, I will remove from it the germ of death ; you will have made it little, I will make it great ; you will have made it in your own image, I will transform it into Mine : it shall be God and man like Me.”

You hear, gentlemen, the power will remain man ; if

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Ephesians, ch. 6, v. 7.

it have the benefit of Christ, it will have also the charge of Christ. However high it may be, it will not be exempted from reckoning with the Gospel and humanity, with Jesus Christ living elsewhere as well as in itself. If it govern by the divine side, it is equal and brother by the human side; it bears with Jesus Christ the resemblance of the poor, and, by that phase of its majesty, it stands before God and before the world upon the plan of humility, of pain, of expiation. I have before said, in this pulpit, that we were the cousins of kings; many were much astonished at that expression. I retract it, then; we are not the cousins of kings, we are only their brothers. This is enough for us. It was sufficient to change from one end to the other all the relations between subjects and sovereigns, and to found the Christian monarchy, with its triple element of fidelity, honor, and liberty. Between the prince and the people, there was an authentic law superior to both, accepted by both, a mediator living in heaven and upon earth, who was Jesus Christ. Louis XIV., notwithstanding all his pride, when the festival of Easter arrived, was obliged to render a solemn homage to the morality which he had outraged, and to repudiate Madame de Montespan. It was needful to reckon sooner or later with the Gospel, even were it but upon his death-bed; and although that barrier and that responsibility might have become lessened, at least, even in the worst times, the prince was preserved from the extravagance of the East. No Catholic prince, even the very worst, at the epoch of the decadence, has left behind him a name like the names of the East, or of Rome degenerated.

This sad glory was reserved to heresy; it was necessary to break with Catholic society, in order for a Christian land to bear kings like Henry VIII., of England, and like all those monsters who have inaugurated the reign of the Muscovite power in Europe.

Gentlemen, the Christian monarchy no longer exists ; it became extinct with Louis XIV., who was its last representative, not an irreproachable representative, not a representative equal to Charlemagne and to Saint Louis, a great deal too much was wanting for that ; but, in fine, the last representative which the Christian monarchy had. After him, the Gospel and Jesus Christ quitted the thrones of Europe ; Rationalism, more or less disguised, has mounted there in their place, and with Rationalism, all those events of which the world, by a reaction which may be called legitimate, has been the theatre, the witness, and the actor.

Why has that great creation perished ? Because, in the first place, it was the offspring of truth, but not truth itself ; the offspring of justice and charity, but not justice and charity in themselves. It was of the world ; it was mingled with a human element, and it was impossible that, sooner or later, by the course of things, some source of ruin and destruction should not have become introduced into it. It has been so. If God had permitted the Christian monarchy, that ally of Catholic society, always to subsist side by side with Catholic society, you would have thought, in the future it would perhaps have been thought, that the strength of the Church was in a human power. It would have been said that Charlemagne, Saint Louis, some other great prince, from age to age, had borne Christ, and had created His destiny. This could not be. Time has then received permission from God to do its work here as elsewhere. But has time alone done all ? Is it alone responsible for the ruins which we behold ? Shall the respect which I owe to the ashes of the dead keep me from speaking the whole truth ? You have heard that I have not profited by the ideas of the present time to recede before my duty ; I have not been so timorous as to flatter your passions and your prejudices, and to sacri-

fice to them fourteen hundred years of the history of the country, because those fourteen hundred years do not resemble those fifty years of which you are the sons.

No, to everything its own glory, to every period its power ; I have not abused the past ; I shall not abuse the present time. I know why you do what you do ; I know the reasons which support you, and which give to your work a character which I am obliged to respect. I must do more, I must say in favor of our time that which ought to be said ; I must say this distinctly, boldly, with as much independence as I have exercised in treating of the past.

The Christian monarchy was founded upon an alliance of which Jesus Christ was the spirit and the mediator, of which the Gospel was the perpetual baptism of the heart. On the day when sovereignty reached the point of abusing the obedience and veneration which had been communicated to it by the Gospel and Jesus Christ, on that day sovereignty destroyed itself with its own hands, it dug out an abyss under itself, it returned towards the East. Jesus Christ beheld it, He raised Himself, He folded back again upon His breast those arms which were crucified for us, He descended from the throne, and that Christian monarchy then became but an open sepulchre, the ashes of which have been thrown to the winds. Jesus Christ was its support ; the liberty of Christ and the Gospel has not been respected. The passions leagued together attacked Christianity ; Christianity has retired, it has departed. It has said to human society : " I have my eternal destinies ; remain thou with time, and become what thou canst ! "

And from that divorce, from that separation, modern time is sprung ; it has arisen as a protestation of the people in favor of the Gospel ; it has appeared because the people would not become like the East ; it has ap-

peared because fraternity having departed, paternity was no more, because honor and liberty were no longer safe.

And what will now arrive? Will the Christian monarchy reconstitute itself? Will the evangelic law reassume its empire over the world in another form? I know not. That which I know well is, that I do not despair of Providence; having found God in that which has preceded me, I hope to find him in that which is to follow, and, to use the expression of a great German poet: "I am a citizen of the time to come!"



## THIRTY-SIXTH CONFERENCE.

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OF THE INFLUENCE OF CATHOLIC SOCIETY UPON NATURAL  
SOCIETY WITH REGARD TO THE COMMUNITY OF POSSES-  
SIONS AND OF LIVING.

MY LORD,

GENTLEMEN,

IN exposing to you the influence of Catholic society upon property, I said that the voluntary community of possessions and of living was a Christian idea ; but I said so without offering any explanation. Yet, gentlemen, we shall not have a complete idea of the effects of Catholic doctrine upon human society, if we do not halt to consider that great institution of the community of possessions and of living ; for, among all the creations of Catholic society, there is not one, perhaps, which presents characters more striking, more difficult to reconcile, and in which is better summed up with all the empire of doctrine, all the demonstration of its divinity.

You know that, from the earliest days of the general preaching of the Gospel, after the resurrection of Christ and the day of Pentecost, from those first days, it is written that "*the multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul : neither did any one of them say that of the things which he possessed, anything was his own ; but all things were common to them. Neither was there one among them that wanted. For as many as were owners of lands*

*or houses, sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the apostles ; and distribution was made to every man according as he had need."*<sup>1</sup>

These are the very expressions of the sacred text, and you also remember that the first exercise which the apostolic power made of the rights of anathema was against two disciples, who had deceived the apostles as to the price of their possessions by fraudulently keeping back a part of it. This text which is so clear, this event so remarkable, in which the apostle Peter cast down dead by his words two disciples, for having deceived the Church in an act of devotedness which was not commanded—all this reveals to you the importance which the Holy Ghost, the Author of the Scriptures, attached to the first lineaments from whence, at a later period, by a marvellous development, was to spring that monastic institution which has filled the world with its history.

It is not my intention, gentlemen, to regard the community of possessions and of living in its spiritual point of view. That view would throw me back again upon the questions of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which I treated of last year, in exposing to you the effects of Catholic doctrine upon the soul. Our theme for to-day is quite of another character, and I have to develop only what has been the influence of the monastic institution upon the destinies of natural society. Has that influence existed? Has it done good or evil? This is the object of our inquiry, and with which we shall terminate the Conferences of this year.

I cannot close them, gentlemen, without thanking you for your pious attention in matters so grave, often so delicate, and, I venture to say, I have not approached them of my own choice, but have been constrained thereto by the logical force of my subject. For if anything be foreign to my

<sup>1</sup> Acts of the Apostles ch. 4, v. 32, 34, 35.

character as well as to my duty, it is seeking for elements of emotion in that which withdraws itself from eternity, to draw nearer to time. We have not always the power absolutely to avoid this peril ; but when it has presented itself to me, I have sought to infuse into my language as much of prudence as truth, and if I err not, between that Scylla and that Charybdis of speaking, I mean sincerity and reserve, I have rarely run aground. However that may be, gentlemen, whatever may be my share of merit, I acknowledge yours, and I thank you for it. I desire also to thank the chief pastor of this diocese, who during so many years has constantly brought to our meetings the influence of his great judgment and the dignity of his person, thus adding to the personal debt which I have contracted towards him, a weight which daily increases, but which, in increasing, serves but to soothe my gratitude and my life.

I maintain two things in regard to voluntary community of possessions and living ; namely, that it is the most exalted economical idea, and the most exalted philanthropical idea which the world has known. In the first place, it is the most exalted economical idea ; for, gentlemen, economically speaking, what do we seek ? We have limited possessions, and desires which are but little limited ; it was needful to find the secret of diminishing desires by multiplying possessions, and by sharing them. Now, the voluntary community of possessions and of living produces this threefold effect : it divides possessions, increases their measure, and diminishes the need which we have of them. Under this rule, he who has most, brings voluntarily to him who has little, or who has nothing ; he who has nothing, or but little with regard to the body, but who is rich in mind, brings his part in intelligence ; he who is poor at the same time in regard to the body and the mind, can give something still better to the community, in bringing

to it a solid virtue. So that there is communion of patrimony with deprivation of possessions, great ability with little, strength with weakness, all the disadvantages compensated by all the advantages ; and the result is a mutual sharing, a brotherhood, an artificial family as free as equitable, who present to our imagination and to our sentiment of justice the ideal of perfection.

There are some among you, gentlemen, who have visited a community of La Trappe—I call them to witness. What have they not felt on beholding that assembly of men so different in origin, age, history, and recollections ; one bears upon his face the scars of combats ; another's brow is lighted up by the brightness of imagination ; a third bears the indelible furrow of conquered love ; a fourth exhibits laborious hands accustomed to hard toil ; all these existences, in fine, which were so prodigiously unequal in their birth and in their course and have here become blended together in the divine equality of one and the same destiny until death. This spectacle has forcibly touched the hearts of all those who have beheld it ; not one, however great his unbelief in God might have been, has refused to that work of His right hand a quarter of an hour's faith and admiration. How, in fact, can it be resisted, and what more can be desired in equity ? What more for the man who is still alive to the selfishness of the world, and who, even in the bosom of family, in the midst of the most sacred interests, has found again the concentration of self, and the exclusion of others ? What more than having met with men who have risen superior to personality, giving their whole being for a little bread, which is dealt out to them day by day ; and even were they princes in the region of intelligence or birth, making themselves willingly the least and the last amongst their brethren ? Let those who are distant say what they may against such an institution, no one will cross the threshold,



to examine it closely, without returning more discontented with himself, and without having learned something about man and about God, which will often afford him food for thought.

Besides the equitable sharing of possessions, the monastic institution greatly increases their measure and their value. Strange circumstance! Trappists settle upon a soil which hardly suffices to nourish one or two families; a hundred of them live there, and live easily! That sweat of devotedness, mingled with the earth, fertilizes it, and causes it to produce fruits which it never accords to any other cultivation. It would seem that God, who labors always with man, lends His help more bountifully to the hand which shares with others; and that the earth itself, become sensible to fraternity, shows itself jealous on that occasion to unite with God and man by a greater efficacy. It is easy to prove this. Visit one of those monasteries which I named just now; study there the whole economical system; consult the nature of the soil, examine the harvests, count the number of the inhabitants, and you will be astonished that the earth, elsewhere so niggardly, should there be so prodigal, and sometimes so in spite of swamps, and sands, and rocks. You will behold, with your own eyes, the poor flocking to the house of prayer, and receiving there the daily portion which is prepared by the brotherhood from within for the brotherhood which is without: for the cenobite does not envelop himself in his poverty as in a personal benefice; he distributes its treasure to the poverty of the stranger, and obtains from the common patrimony a fecundity which fills the host as well as the son of the house.

At the same time that goods increase by more profound labor and by a more watchful blessing, desires and wants diminish in a fabulous proportion. Will you believe it? There are members of religious orders who live at two or



three hundred francs a year per head, others at four or five hundred francs; and I believe I do not err in affirming, that the highest figure, under the least favorable circumstances, rises to eight hundred francs. Where is the educated man, gentlemen, that is to say, having studied a little Greek and Latin, who would or could live upon eight hundred francs a year? Will you find even one? Would not such a fate be considered to be the depth of humiliation and misery to any man knowing how to use a pen or a pencil? Yet, thousands of cenobites, learned themselves, and sometimes distinguished scholars, are satisfied with less, and thank Providence for having given them their daily bread and to spare. They discover those beneath themselves whom they also help; they admire the place which has been chosen for them in the light of this world, and wonder at the privileged choice which has fallen upon them. Would it not, gentlemen, be a social benefit, worthy of consideration, to have an annual *levée* of some thousands of educated men willing to accept eight hundred francs a year in exchange for their merits, and withdrawing from the struggle, with their exterior wants, the still more insatiable hydra of their pride or their ambition!

The Comte de Maistre said, in speaking of Robespierre: "If that man had been covered with a frock, instead of the robe of an *avocat*, perhaps some profound philosopher would have said, on meeting with him: Great God! of what use is that man?" Men have since learned how much his absence would have been a blessing for the world.

Unite in your minds, gentlemen, on the one hand, the increase of the value of land produced by the monastic mode of living, and on the other, the diminution produced in the general wants and desires of which it is the cause, and you will certainly find, as a result, a phenomenon

with regard to economy, to which there is no parallel. This is not yet all; for the artificial family, in withdrawing from the natural family a number of its children, considerably lightens its burden. In the countries where monastic life is in its vigor, there are few families which have not their representatives in the monastery. One vocation pays the dowry of a daughter and the charge of a son. Not only is the family relieved from the charge of disbursing, but on the day of succession to their inheritance, a part or the whole of the share of the voluntarily dead returns to the privileged living. These economical advantages are so palpable, that parents have even been accused of making use of strategy or violence to induce their children to retire from the world. That accusation has, perhaps, been just in certain cases, notwithstanding the vigilance of the Church; it is by no means so for those who know the resistance which the greater part of even Christian and pious families show, to consecrate, by their consent, the vows which wound their affections.

I shall say no more upon the economical view of the question. Thanks to God! it is now judged. It is admitted that association is the only great economical means which the world knows, and that if you do not associate men in labor, in savings, in relief, and in making good their losses, the greater number amongst them would be the victims of an intelligent minority, better instructed in the means of success. I do not take it upon myself to praise all the plans of association which come to light, all the attempts at community which seek for support. I praise only the intention, because it is an homage to the real wants of mankind. Forget not, gentlemen, that so long as we are isolated we have to expect only corruption, servitude, and misery; corruption, because we have but to answer for ourselves to ourselves, and because we are not sustained by a body which inspires us with respect

for itself and for us ; servitude, because when man is alone he is powerless to defend himself against anything ; in fine, misery, because the greater number of men are born in conditions too little favorable for sustaining their existence to the end against all the internal and external enemies, if they be not aided by the community of resources against the community of evils. Voluntary association, into which each enters and goes out freely, under conditions determined by experience, is the only efficacious remedy against those three evils of humanity—misery, servitude, and corruption. The Church, since the day after Pentecost, has loudly proclaimed it ; she founded amongst her first disciples the voluntary community of possessions and of living ; she struck dead the hypocrisy which, even then, attempted to corrupt its laws ; and since that time, in the course of ages, she has never ceased to conduct her faithful children to association, under all forms and for all kinds of objects. Her constant maxim has been to unite in order to sanctify and protect, as the constant maxim of the world is to divide in order to reign.

By all these titles, the voluntary community of possessions and of living is evidently a philanthropic institution, that is to say, an institution friendly to men ; but the history of its blessings is not complete, and we should consider it under a more extended point of view.

There are here below five gratuitous and popular kinds of services, without which the people, or, if you prefer a more evangelical expression, without which the poor are necessarily miserable ; and these five gratuitous and popular services have been created by the religious orders, which alone are in a condition to perform them.

The first of all is the gratuitous and popular service of grief. You will say to me : What is the gratuitous and popular service of grief ? It is easy to tell you, gentle-

men ; whatever may be the reason of it, I do not now inquire ; an amount of grief weighs upon the human race. During six thousand years, as a certain quantity of rain falls every year, there falls upon the heart of man a certain quantity of tears. Man has tried every means of escaping from that law ; he has passed through many different conditions, from the state of extreme barbarism to extreme civilization ; he has lived under sceptres of every form and of every weight ; but in all times and places he has shed tears, and however attentively his history may be read, grief is its first and its last word. It sometimes changes its form, and this but rarely ; but it does not change its nature or its quantity. Jesus Christ Himself, He who produced the greatest revolution in grief, Jesus Christ has not very materially lessened it ; He took His share of it, and has transformed, without destroying it. Do, then, what you will ; think of it as much as you please ; be rich, powerful, skilful, immortal, successful in fine ; be all this, I consent to it, but learn, that from your cradle to your grave, you move in a vast system of grief, in which, even if you be spared, grief predominates, and causes others to feel the blows which it disdains to inflict upon you. From whence, or for what reason soever this is written, it is written, and apparently by a hand which keeps to its work. O you, then, O you ! the fortunate in this world, the condemned who have not been seen by the executioner, permit there to exist here below a gratuitous and popular service of grief, that is to say, men, who are willing to take more than their natural lot of sorrow to diminish the portion which the rest will have to bear—to diminish it, if I would speak in a Catholic sense, by the principle of solidarity. Yes, the principle of solidarity. I will some day show you that every man who suffers voluntarily in the world, relieves some one from suffering ; that every man who fasts gives bread to another



who has need of it ; that every man who weeps at the feet of Jesus Christ removes from the bosom of a human creature whom he knows not, but who will be revealed to him in God, a certain quantity of affliction, and that by the principle of solidarity, which causes that, when there is a little more grief in one soul, there is a little less in another ; in the same manner as, when it rains much in a country, it rains less in the neighboring region ; the moral order being regulated, like the physical order, by the same power, the same wisdom, the same justice, the same distribution.

But perhaps you do not comprehend me ; the principle of solidarity is a mystery which revolts you, or of which you are ignorant ; let it be so ! I will be the more silent upon this subject, as I have no need of it ; for if I cannot invoke before you the principle of the diminution of griefs by solidarity, I can at least speak to you without fear of the diminution of grief which takes place by the way of sympathy. It is certain that in seeing others suffer voluntarily, we look upon grief with a more steady and a less rebellious glance. It is certain that a poor man who goes to the door of a monastery to seek his bread, and who is served by a man clothed like himself in poor apparel, and barefooted, has a revelation of poverty which changes it in his eyes, and brings a balm to his heart which no other spectacle will afford him.

Tolerate, then, this first gratuitous and popular service ; let a few simpletons devote themselves for you, if you be unfortunate ; devote themselves also for you, if you be happy ; for you may not be so to-morrow ; and even were you always so, you have need that the people, that great penitent, should forgive you for your happiness. Leave the fanatics alone to console the people in their misery ; let them walk barefooted, so that they may see that it is possible to do so without losing dignity and gladness, and that their scrutinizing regard, interrogating by turns the



outward and the inner man, may see the peace of God stamped upon the brow of the mendicant.

The second gratuitous and popular service of which the poor have need, is the gratuitous and popular service of truth. I admit that you possess truth in your books and in your schools, in the intelligence of your decorated and endowed professors—but below them! Who will carry truth to a lower region? Who will cause it to descend even to the people, who are children of God like yourselves, and who have not the leisure to perceive that truth as they see the sun coming to meet them in the morning? Who will distribute the light of the intelligence to the poor souls of the country districts, which are so inclined to bend towards earth like their bodies, and cause them to stand erect before the august visage of the true, the beautiful, the holy, of that which enraptures man, and imparts to him the courage to live? Who will seek my brother, the man of the people, out of love for him, with a disinterestedness which is felt, for the sole pleasure of discoursing with him of truth, and of talking plainly to him of God between the toil of to-day and that of to-morrow? Who will convey to him, not a dead book, but that priceless thing, a living faith, a soul, in a word, God, sensibly felt in the accent of a phrase—faith, the soul, and God together—saying to him: “Behold me, a man like thyself; I have studied, I have read, I have meditated for thee, who art unable to do so, and I bring thee knowledge. Seek not from afar the demonstration of it; thou seest it in my life; love speaks to thee, and its language is the language of truth!”

Who could, who would venture to speak thus to the people, but the apostle of the people, the Capuchin with his cord and his bare feet? The Church, in her fecundity, prepared eloquent tongues for the poor as well as for kings; she taught her envoys the eloquence of the stubble-field

as well as the eloquence of courts. The apostolic pulpit is now mute before the poor people ; in our country places thousands of our brethren have not once, during forty years, heard the thunder of truth. They have their *Curé*, say you. Yes—I grant it ; they have a worthy representative of religion, a faithful pastor, the edifying spectacle of simple and constant virtue—this is a great deal. But the teaching does not equal the authority of the pastor ; time alone destroys its efficacy, by taking from it the charm of novelty. If you require to hear accents which you have never heard before, you men who inhabit cities, it is also necessary to the men of the fields. The poor, like yourselves, need the charms of language ; they have feelings to be moved, regions in their hearts where truth lies slumbering, and where eloquence shall surprise and awaken it suddenly. Let them hear Demosthenes ; and the Demosthenes of the people is the Capuchin.

To the gratuitous and popular service of truth, another service draws near and unites itself—the gratuitous and popular service of education. The child of the poor is as sacred as the child of the rich. His nature is as rebellious, his lot is harder, his means of culture and good-breeding much less multiplied. Very soon the labor of the body will snatch him away from the exercises of the intelligence ; and if he have not received the precious germs of good with an authority which might have penetrated into his heart, it will not be long before he loses the spirit of a Christian and a civilized man, and lives in a state of degradation which nothing will disguise. Every vice will take possession of his being, with frightful disregard for the things of the soul, and future society will only find in the people, who should be the permanent source of its renovation and vigor, a fund corrupted by the most abject materialism. The teacher of the people, a teacher worthy of them is, then, one of the greatest wants in the

social order. But who will be this teacher? Who is able to unite at the same time in so high an office, sufficient instruction, pure morals, sincere faith, a respected authority, and, lastly, a mode of life sufficiently modest, that the poor man might be able to entertain him in exchange for the lessons which he receives from him? The Church has provided for this by the teaching orders, as she has provided for the gratuitous and popular service of truth by the apostolic orders, for the gratuitous and popular service of grief by the penitent orders. The Brothers of the Christian Schools, and of all the other similar institutions, give to the poor an education which costs little or nothing, and which is worthy of a child of the country as of a child of God.

Here, gentlemen, my task is more easy than but just now. France has authentically accepted the devotedness of the brothers and sisters who have set themselves apart for the instruction of the people; a popularity which is the just reward of their labors, protects them from one end of the country to the other, as much as the empire of the laws. What I address to you on their account is not the language of accusation, but of thankfulness and praise.

But we have not yet finished with the wants of the poor; after the services of grief, of truth, and of education, they claim also the gratuitous and popular service of sickness and death. Gentlemen, it is said that a third of the inhabitants of this great capital die in the hospitals; let us suppose that but a fourth die there: what a figure! In a million of men, more than two hundred thousand have to die far from their wives and children, far from family, between strange walls, which speak not to the heart, if it be not of distress and abandonment. What would the sick and dying people find there if they did not find the Brother of St. John of God and the Sister of Charity?

Mercenaries, hired servants. I desire, and it is my duty, to respect them everywhere—but there! Are they sufficient for that sacred hour of the death of the poor? Is it at so much per day that those should be valued who have to close the eyes of two hundred thousand of our brethren? I say of our brethren, for the people are of us. Moreover, do not deceive yourselves in this matter; in another sense, there are among yourselves those who will die in the hospital, and perhaps I shall also, myself, die there. We live in times full enough of vicissitudes to make us unquiet about our last moment. Well! if you have to die there, if fatality, an expression which is not Christian, but, nevertheless, if fatality should conduct you there! Consider! your life passes away; it is perhaps of but little account, but it will experience an eventful moment—the moment of death—the moment of appearing before God: do you think of this? Here is a man who exclaims: Can it be that in an instant I shall behold eternity? Whether he believe, or do not believe, it is a great abyss. “*To be or not to be,*” a great tragic poet has said, “*that is the question!*” What a question! What a question for a man alone, abandoned in an hospital, face to face with his conscience, face to face with God, who perhaps writes his condemnation upon the wall with His finger, as for Balthazar!

Ah! let love draw near to him, since there is love upon the earth which costs nothing; let a loving representative of God approach him. Why destroy love, because it was Jesus Christ who made it for nothing? To persecute the Sister of the hospitals is to persecute the death of the people; it is to condemn a portion of mankind, and perhaps yourselves also, to agony, as the price of their toils. Perhaps in pleading this cause of the death of the people, I plead also the cause of your last hour, of your last thought, of your last breath. It is a matter for consideration.



The last gratuitous and popular service is the gratuitous and popular service of blood. Europe has not always had regular armies as she has now. There was a time when each nation had only the swords of its gentlemen and bands hired with money, which were dispersed after the war. The disorders inseparable from this kind of life were then greater, and the people suffered severely from them. The Church endeavored to provide against them, and to provide also for the defence of Christianity, menaced by Islamism, by instituting those celebrated military orders, such as the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, the Knights Templars, the Teutonic Knights, and others of less exalted renown. To unite monastic life with the life of camps, to heighten the sacrifice of blood by the sacrifice made in good morals and piety, to pass from the sanctuary to the combat—such was the heroic idea which gave birth to the new institution, and which is consecrated in history by pages which time will never efface. We may well think that our regiments are as good as the holy legions of Christian chivalry; but we shall not forget the times of the Crusades, the defence of Rhodes against Mahomet II. and Soliman II.; John de la Valette, stopping once and for all under the walls of Malta the forces of the Ottoman empire; and, in a word, all that glory created by our chevaliers, which ages have borne to us on their account.

It would not, perhaps, be difficult to prove to you, that even now the gratuitous and popular service of blood would be a beneficial and an admirable institution; but time presses upon us. Let us say only that if the present time does not call for the aid of Christian chivalry, the time may come when nations may not disdain its resurrection. Yes, the time may come when, to defend ourselves against the invasion of barbarism, the vulgar sword will no longer suffice; when science, taken in its



proper inventions, will have need of faith and charity to save the honor and liberty of the world, by arms of which the enemy will remain deprived, all the others being at its service, because all the others require but chemistry and hands. Sooner or later, perhaps, evil will prevail by physical force, and it will be necessary that good, re-tempered in other sources, should elevate the cross as high as the sword.

I believe, gentlemen, that I have proved my thesis, namely, that the voluntary community of possessions is an institution as remarkable in the philanthropical as in the economical point of view, and that nothing has been created in the world more useful and more in favor of the people than the military orders, the hospitable orders, the teaching orders, the apostolical orders, and the penitent orders. This is, however, only a part of monastic history; if I would relate the rest to you, speak to you of the services rendered by that glorious institution to letters, to the arts, to the sciences, and in missions, I should not complete my task with the day.

And can I conclude without naming France on an occasion which so naturally presents the remembrance of her to me? France is the monastic country *par excellence*. Without going back so far as to St. Martin of Tours, and to that famous monastery of Marmoutiers—France founded, in the tenth century, the order of Cluny, which has governed the Church by the great popes which she has received from it, and which was the cause of the renovation of monastic life in the West; in the eleventh century the order of Chartreux, those of Cîteaux, of Fontevrault, of the Prémontrés; in the twelfth century, the reform of Clairvaux by St. Bernard, and the Trinitarians for the redemption of captives; in the thirteenth, the order of St. Dominic, by a Spaniard, but in France, and with Frenchmen; in the sixteenth, the Company of Jesus, founded in

Paris itself; in the seventeenth, the reform of La Trappe by the Abbé de Rancé, the priests of the mission of St. Vincent of Paul, the Sisters of Charity, the Brothers of the Christian Schools. I name, gentlemen, only the principal foundations; the others would form a list without end. Even now, after revolutions which have ploughed up the monastic soil with all the rest, France reproduces her ancient religious orders, and prepares new ones, in virtue of a fertility of devotedness which is as natural to her as the richness of her harvest. She resuscitates on all sides the great gratuitous and popular services; and whilst on the surface she bears wounds of incredulity which deceive the eye, she draws from her vitals a vegetation which gladdens the future. You are not aware of this, perhaps, gentlemen, you did not think it was so; but what of that? France is accustomed to perform great things, even without knowing it.

I shall say but one word, gentlemen, of the voluntary community of possessions and of living, without the pale of the Catholic Church. It is remarkable that heathen antiquity, save one single exception, of which I am about to speak to you, was completely sterile in this regard. We find there sacerdotal colleges, priests living with their family around the temple to which they were attached; but the monastery in its true signification did not exist. Buddhism alone forms an exception to this rule; Buddhism has covered eastern Asia with pagodas and convents, in which living in common is practised under a code of laws which bear apparent analogies with the Christian laws of monastic life. Travellers have spoken much of the evil existing in those assemblies, which have become corrupted by indolence. For Buddhism has drawn nothing from them for the public service, save the spectacle of a certain exterior penance, which does not of itself result in any useful and regular work. I shall make no further

allusions to it. A religious idea, favored by the aptitude of the East to contemplation, has created this singular phenomenon, but it has only created it dead, without any profit for the advancement of those nations in better courses than those in which time found them, and has left them to pine away.

Protestantism, in separating from the Church, has not even preserved the fertility of Buddhism; so far from having the power to produce a Brother of the Schools, or a Sister of Charity, it does not even produce a penitent Hindoo.

The Greeks, more fortunate, by the same reason which has caused them to preserve nearly the whole body of Catholic doctrine, have also preserved the tradition of monastic institutions, but without action. Their monasteries are like their faith.

It results from this glance, that beyond the religious idea, the voluntary community of possessions and of living has never been seen realized. What is the reason of this? It is, I believe, gentlemen, easy to understand. The voluntary community of possessions and of living is only possible under two conditions; that the man who has shares with him who has not, and that the high capacity humbles itself to the level of the low capacity, to serve it in the same rank. Now, this abnegation is invincibly repugnant to the selfish nature of man, as long as it be not raised up by a religious principle. The man who has, desires to make use of his patrimony in order to increase it; the man who is able, desires to use his intelligence in order to rise. Religion alone teaches us to descend and give up what we have voluntarily, and consequently to associate together.

Now, gentlemen, that the need of association manifests itself on all hands, and that after having destroyed Christian association, men desire to reconstruct another on the basis of pure reason, what do we see? We see, among

other curious efforts, men consuming themselves in the most subtle and most ingenious dreams of the world, to substitute in association the law of pleasure for the law of devotedness. Men wish to persuade themselves, and to persuade others, that there exists in the chaos of the passions, of the human faculties and interests, a mathematical and secret order, which, being discovered, and next practised, will everywhere substitute enjoyment for grief, inclination for duty, and, in the infinite diversity of its functions, make of the world a harmonious assemblage, in which each will voluntarily find and keep his place, without a single movement of that beautiful machine ever getting out of order. It will be Orpheus or Amphion making Thebes of men at the simple sound of his lyre.

Human nature has not yet responded to that ingenious appeal; it remains unmoved before that bait which is held out to it, and opposes to the *harmonien* pleasure, as it is designated, its old and selfish tenacity to individual pleasure. When it is willing *to lose its life in order to save it*, it will look elsewhere; it knows where is the cross which inspires and rewards devotedness. It does not believe in these mathematics of pleasure, because pleasure is beyond all rule, and to seek for its law or unity, is to seek for order in disorder, for affirmation in negation, existence in nothingness. And should they succeed, what man of heart would desire to live in a society where enjoyment alone would be satisfied? What man of heart could do without his efforts and virtue? If we were one day to be held under that pitiless law of enjoyment, we should bring about, against the despotism of happiness, as many revolutions as we have produced against another form of despotism; we should break the distaff as we have broken the axe. Pleasure is not the foundation of society, but virtue; enjoyment is not our vocation here below, but labor and grief. God has created us expressly to produce



by us a thing which He could not produce alone ; that is to say, greatness in vileness, strength in infirmity, purity in flesh and blood, love in egotism, good in evil, virtue in a heart which possessed each moment the liberty of being a hardened sinner. This is our vocation, our destiny. Jesus Christ has conquered the world only because He knew it ; and because, from His cross, slave and God, He has supremely filled it. Salvation is found in following Him, and also all glory and all happiness. This is why, thanks to God ! pleasure and inclination will never found a society here below ; misfortune will be the stronger in order that virtue may be ; there will be poor in it, that alms may be given ; wounds, precisely that they may be bound up ; tears, precisely that they may be accepted ; disorders, that men may aspire to stability ; ruins, that pride may be humbled ; public misery, that there may be gratuitous and popular services ; blood shed, that there may be saints.

Gentlemen, the first part of our Conferences is completed.

I had to show you the phenomenal divinity of the Church. Taking in the world the Church, which is a visible and a living body, I had to prove to you that she is divine, that is to say, that she was not founded by man, but by God. The demonstration has been long, for I have five times returned to it. In 1835 I brought before you the organic constitution of the Church, and showed you that it was superhuman. In 1836 I examined her doctrinal constitution, and showed you that it was equally superhuman. In the three last years which have just passed,<sup>1</sup> I have shown you, by the effects of Catholic doctrine upon the mind, upon the soul, and upon society, which are the three theatres of all action, that the Church, as the depositary and organ of that doctrine, was evi-

<sup>1</sup>1843, 1844, 1845.



dently endowed with an incomparable and superhuman power. I have no more to say on this head.

But who has performed this work! Who has built up the Church? Who has traced out her organic and doctrinal constitution? Who has given to her power upon the mind to produce in it certainty and knowledge in the highest degree? Who has given to her power upon the soul to produce in it humility, chastity, charity, religion? Who has given to her, in regard to the social order, an unity without example, and an expansion without limits? Who, in fine, has given to her, with regard to purely natural society, the power to transform law, property, family, authority, and to create the voluntary community of possessions and of living? Who, gentlemen? Ah! I have already often named Him! It is He who is here before you; it is He whose name, sooner or later, will cause every knee to bend, in heaven, on the earth, and in hell. I pronounce once more, in concluding, that name which, of all names, is the most dear to me. I name with faith, hope, love, adoration, the Lord Jesus Christ!

But what is He? From whence does He come? From whence does He derive His power? What is His history? We shall see this, gentlemen; we shall learn it; from to-day I convoke you for next year at the foot of His cross, and may we carry there hearts still better prepared for truth—yours to receive it, and mine to impart it to you!

## PANEGYRIC OF DANIEL O'CONNELL.

DELIVERED AT NOTRE DAME, IN PARIS IN 1847.

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Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam, quoniam ipsi saturabuntur.<sup>1</sup>

MY LORD,<sup>2</sup>

GENTLEMEN,

I SHALL say nothing to you of the words you have just heard, pronounced as they were for the first time by Him who uttered so many new words to the world. I shall say nothing of them, because they will resound throughout the whole of my discourse; and because at each word, at each phrase, at each movement, you will exclaim to yourselves, and I shall have no need to repeat to you: "*Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled!*" And this numerous assembly, this expectation, this solemn preoccupation of your hearts, what is all this but the justice that descends, that comes down from heaven upon a man who hoped not, in his agitated life, so soon to receive the unanimous gratitude of the present age, nor even of the future? And who is this man, at once master of a posterity hardly born around his tomb? By what charm has he so prematurely commanded justice? Is he a king who sleeps with his ances-

<sup>1</sup> "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled."—*Saint Matthew*, chap. 6, ver. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Monseigneur l'Eveque de Saint Flour.

tors, after having gloriously governed his people? Is he a conqueror who has carried the prowess of his arms to the ends of the earth? Is he a legislator who has founded some nation in the chaos of beginnings or of ruins? No, no, he is none of these, and he is more than all; he is a man who was neither prince, captain, nor founder of empire; he is a simple citizen, who governed more than kings, gained more battles than conquerors, accomplished more than any of those who have ordinarily received the mission to destroy or build up. His country gave him the name of **LIBERATOR**; and if we take this title only in a limited sense it would be great enough to justify even the unusual honors which we render to him, to explain to us why Rome, the mistress of august glories, has opened to him her basilicas, and why, although a foreigner to our country, these sacred and patriotic vaults of *Nôtre Dame* now cover the admiration which remains living upon his tomb. It would have been enough, I say, that he was the liberator of an oppressed country to justify all that Rome, France, and the world think of his memory, and do in order to honor it. But I do not halt at this point of view; it is too narrow for him, for you, for your expectation, for the thoughts that besiege my heart. I purpose to show you that this man has marked his place among the greatest liberators of the Church and of mankind. I put aside, then, if I may do so, all ideas of country, which are neither great nor high enough for our subject. I open the grandest theatre in which a human remembrance can be placed, that of the Church and all mankind.

O my God, the Father of justice, I thank Thee that in these times, which witness too many mysteries of iniquity, Thou permittest me to speak here the eulogium of a man of justice; whose long and agitated career has not cost a drop of blood, nor even a tear; of one who, after having moved

more men and more nations than we find any other instance of in history, has descended into his tomb pure from all reproach, without fear that any living soul will be able to raise its stone and call him to give account, in the fifty years of his public life, I do not say of a guilty action, but of a disaster. I thank Thee, O my God, that such is the object of this assembly, and also for that justice which Thou hast promised to all men, and which I am about to render in Thy name and in the name of Christendom, to the memory of Daniel O'Connell.

From the beginning the world has possessed a divine light, divine charity, divine authority, a divine society. From the primitive fields of Eden to the summit of Ararat, from Ararat to the rock of Sinai, from Sinai to Mount Sion and Calvary, from Calvary to the hill of the Vatican, God has never ceased to act and to be present upon earth. And it seems that this reign of heaven-born light, charity, and authority: this union of souls by God and in God, our common Father: should, if it were possible, obtain unanimity here below, or at least not encounter enemies and struggles. But we are here in the land of combat, and God has been the first to submit to it; He has consented to give us His life, inasmuch as it is blended with our own, to be judged by us, and consequently to be accepted by some and rejected by others. This sacred war is as old as the world; it will continue as long as the world shall last. But in its vicissitudes we remark two periods and two missions prouder than the rest; the periods of persecution and of deliverance; the mission of persecutors and the mission of liberators. When the world is more than usually weary of God, whether of hearing of Him or whether considering His power too great, it makes an effort against Him, and, too feeble in reason to banish Him by the simple forces of the soul, it has recourse to the brutalities of the material order. It overthrows, it



burns, it destroys whatsoever is marked with the divine sign, until, satisfied with the silence and the desert which it has created, it judges that, at least, if it have not conquered, it has nevertheless gained a few days of truce and triumph. But God is never more powerful than in these very days; He rises up from ruins by a germination which no one accounts for to himself; or rather, mankind, troubled by His absence, returns towards Him as a child calls back his father to the domestic hearth from whence he had banished him. Justice, truth, eternal order, resume their reign in the conscience of the human race, and the age of deliverance succeeds to the age of persecution. Then appears one of those men whom Providence prepares beforehand in the omnipotent secrets of His counsels; a Moses delivering the people of God from the hands of Egypt; a Cyrus bringing them from Babylon to the fields of their country; a Judas Maccabæus maintaining their independence against the successors of Alexander; and, at a later period, a Constantine, a Charlemagne, a Gregory VII.—Constantine, who gave liberty of conscience to Christians; Charlemagne, who, against the Greek emperors, the barbarian kings and the future itself, assured the independence of the vicar of God; Gregory VII., who drew the Church from the deadly grasp of feodality: illustrious names, the most rare and the greatest in all history! And you may perhaps think me unwise in pronouncing them, lest they should outshine the glory of him whom I seek to honor. For my part, gentlemen, I have none of this fear, and you will judge whether I be in error.

Open a map of the world, and consider at its two extremities those two groups of islands, the islands of Japan and the British Isles. Follow the trace of the nations upon that line of three thousand leagues in length; count Japan, China, Russia, Sweden, Prussia, Denmark, Han-



over, England, Ireland. You will count in vain; in all that number of kingdoms there is not one where the Church of God enjoys her inalienable liberties; where her teaching, her sacraments, and her assemblies are not humiliated and captive. What! so many nations at the same time despoiled of the holy independence of the children of God! What! among those two hundred millions of men there have been found no hearts strong enough to maintain somewhere the rights of conscience and the dignity of the Christian! Ah! do not deceive yourselves; God has never left truth without martyrs; that is to say, without witnesses ready to serve it even with their blood; and as the scandal of oppression had reached its term here in extent, duration, and vigor, God, on His side, has also wrought a new miracle in the history of martyrdom. Men and families had been seen to die for their faith, and to leave behind them, from that grand spectacle, only their mutilated limbs and their incorruptible remembrance. But a whole people living in continual martyrdom, generations of souls, bound together by the same terrestrial country, transmitting to each other the heritage of the faith in suffering, hereditary also—this had never been seen. God has willed and produced it; He has willed it in our own times and has produced it in our own times. Among those nations which I just now showed you, linked to each other in space and in spiritual bondage, there is one which has not accepted the yoke; which, materially enslaved, has remained free by the soul. One of the proudest powers of the world has struggled hand to hand with her in order to drag her into the abyss of schism and apostacy. Doomed to a war of extermination, she has yielded without betraying either the courage of combats, or the courage of faithfulness to God. Despoiled of her native land by gigantic confiscations, she has cultivated for her conquerors the fields of

her ancestors, and from the sweat of her brow gained the bread which sufficed for her to live with honor and to die with faith. Famine disputed that crust of bread with her; she lifted towards Providence her eyes, which did not accuse Him. Neither war, nor spoliation, nor famine, have caused her either to perish or apostatize; her oppressors, however powerful they were, have not been able to exhaust life in her vitals, or duty in her heart. In fine, as even the boldest and the basest sword cannot kill for ever, tyranny has sought something even more constant than steel, and the Revelation of Saint John has been seen verified in that victim nation; that a time will come when *no man might buy or sell but those that have in their hand or on their forehead the mark of the beast*, that is to say, of apostacy.

This people, then, at a single stroke, was deprived of all its political and civil rights. Every living being is born with a right. Even the inanimate stone brings into the world a law which protects and ennobles it; it is under the guardianship of the mathematical law—an eternal law, forming but one single thing with the essence of God, and which does not permit you to touch even an atom without respecting its force and its right. Every being, however feeble, is thus endowed with a part of the power and the eternity of God, and by a stronger reason man, a creature who thinks and wills, the first-born of the Divine intelligence and will; so that to take from man his native right is a crime so great that the very stone, could its right be taken from it, would accuse the ravisher of parricide and sacrilege. What must it then be to defraud a people of its rights? Yet this has been done to this heroic people whose sufferings and constancy I have described to you! Yet more, gentlemen; this rape of right, this legal murder of a nation, has not been established in an absolute, but in a conditional manner, so that it was

always possible to the nation, and to its members, to save themselves from public and civil death by apostacy. The law said to them : You are nothing ; apostatize, and you shall be something. You are slaves ; apostatize, and you shall be free. You are dying of hunger ; apostatize, and you shall be rich. What a temptation ! and how deep was the calculation, if conscience were not deeper even than hell ! Fear nothing for this martyr people ; for two whole centuries it is greater than that seduction, and lifts its trembling hands towards God, saying in its heart : “ God sees them, and He sees us ; they will have their reward, and we shall have ours.”

I shall not, gentlemen, pronounce the name of this dear and hallowed people, this people stronger than death : my lips are not pure and ardent enough to utter it ; but heaven knows it ; the earth blesses it ; every generous heart opens for it a country, a love, a refuge. . . . O heaven that sees, O earth that knows, O all of you, better and more worthy than I, name this people for me, name it ; say : Ireland !

Ireland, gentleman ! Such was her condition when the eighteenth century opened, and was inaugurated under the hand of God by two peals of thunder ; one exploded in the New World, upon shores as yet hardly known, the other in the bosom of our own country. These two shocks of Providence warned the oppressors of Ireland ; it caused them to suspect that a reign of justice and liberty was preparing in the conscience of men by such memorable catastrophes ; and whether from fear or the rising of compassion, they loosened a little the fetters which chained the life of their victim. Among the rights then restored was one, in appearance of little value—that of defending private interests before the tribunals of ordinary jurisdiction. Assuredly, gentlemen, the concession seemed to be but of slight importance and of little interest for the future ; but England had not reflected that it would give freedom

to speech, and that to give freedom to speech is to deliver God ; for speech from lips inspired by faith is truth, charity, authority. Speech teaches, strengthens, commands, combats ; speech is the true liberator of consciences ; and when oppressors open the field to it we may believe, without being wanting in respect for them, that they know not what they do. Speech then became free in Ireland, and from the first day, in the very hour whilst it still wondered to find itself no longer shackled, it touched the heart and lips of a young man of five-and-twenty, and found that those lips were eloquent and that heart was great.

Suddenly the lakes of Ireland held upon their waves the breezes which ruffled them ; her forests stood still and trembling ; her mountains seemed as in expectation. Ireland heard free and Christian speech, full of God and country, skilful in maintaining the rights of the weak, calling to account the abuses of authority, conscious of its strength, and imparting it to the whole people. Truly it is a happy day when a woman brings her first-born into the world ; it is a happy day when the captive sees again the full light of heaven ; it is a happy day also when the exile returns to his country ; but none of these delights—the greatest which man enjoys—produces or equals the thrilling of a people who, after long centuries, hears for the first time, human and divine language in the plenitude of their liberty ; and Ireland owed that unspeakable joy to this young man of five-and-twenty, whose name was Daniel O'Connell.

In less than ten years, O'Connell foresaw that he would one day be master of his fellow-citizens ; and thenceforth he meditated on the plan which he should follow for their emancipation. Where should he begin ? Which of the links of that heavy chain was the first to be broken ? He considered that the rights of conscience passed before all



others; that there, in that servitude of the soul, was the centre and corner stone of all tyranny, and that, consequently, this was the first point to attack. The emancipation of the Catholics of Ireland and England became his daily preoccupation, the constant dream of his genius. I shall not relate to you all his efforts and disappointments. Both were innumerable. Ten more years passed in these unfruitful trials. Neither the man nor the time was ready; Providence is slow, and patience equal to His own is the gift which He accords to the men who are worthy to serve as His instruments. At last the hour struck when O'Connell knew that he was the moral chief of his nation, that he held in his hand all the minds and hearts, all the ideas, and all the interests of Ireland, and that no movement would be made save under his sovereign direction. It had cost him twenty years of labor to arrive at that memorable day when he was able to say without pride: Now I am king of Ireland.

It is a great thing, gentlemen, to become the chief of a party. When a man has the right to say that he governs a party it is enough to satisfy the most immoderate<sup>3</sup> ambition, so difficult is it to bring into obedience those even who share all our thoughts and designs. The creation of a party is a masterpiece of power and skill; and yet the leader of a party is nothing in comparison with the man who has become the moral leader of a whole nation, and who holds it under his laws, without army, without police, without tribunals, without any other resource than his genius and devotedness. The reign of O'Connell commenced in 1823. In that year he established throughout Ireland an association which he called the Catholic Association; and as no association has any power without a constant revenue, O'Connell founded the emancipation rent, and fixed it at a penny per month.

Let us not smile, gentlemen; there was in that penny



per month a great financial calculation, and a still greater calculation of the heart. Ireland was poor, and a poor people has but one means of becoming rich; it is by every hand giving to the country from the little which it possesses. The emancipation penny invited every son of Erin to share in the glorious work of emancipation; poverty, however great it was, deprived none of the hope of being rich enough by the end of the month to cast an insult at the gold of England.

The Catholic Association and the emancipation rent obtained unheard-of success, and raised the action of O'Connell to the power and dignity of a government.

Three years after, in 1826, at the time of the general elections, it was a marvel to see the Irish, who up to that time had voted at the dictation and in favor of their oppressors—it was a marvel, I say, to see them by their votes proclaiming their rights and their intention thenceforth of defending them.

This was as yet nothing; soon O'Connell appeared before the electors of Clare, and offered himself as a candidate for a seat in the parliament of England. He was elected in spite of the oath which placed the barrier of apostacy between him and a seat in the legislative assembly; and he dared to present himself, with his election in his hand and his faith in his heart, within those walls of Westminster, which trembled before a Catholic who violated their ancient majesty and intolerance by the astounding pretension of seating and of placing there in the person of an outlaw, a Catholic, an Irishman, the very impersonation of a whole people.

Public opinion was moved to its very foundations; all Ireland was ready; proud yet obedient, agitated yet peaceful. Sympathy, encouragement, help came to her from every part of Europe, from the shores of America, and from England herself—moved at last in some of her

children by the cry of justice so eloquently claimed. Neither the English minister nor the King of Great Britain were disposed to grant Catholic emancipation; ardent prejudices still existed in the two chambers, which during thirty years had often rejected similar projects, although softened towards Protestant pride by hard conditions. But the remains of those old passions vainly opposed a barrier to the sentiments of general equity; the world was at one of those magic hours when it does not follow its own will. On the 13th of April, 1829, the emancipation of Catholics was proclaimed by a bill emanating from the minister, accepted by the legislature, and signed by the King.

Let us halt a moment, gentlemen, to reflect upon the causes of so memorable an event; for you will understand that a single man, whatever may be his genius, would not have been able to bring about this revolution if it had not been prepared beforehand and brought to maturity by the very power of the times. We must acknowledge this, under pain of falling into excess in the most just praise, and of transforming admiration into a blind rather than a generous sentiment. It was amongst us—for I never lose an opportunity of returning to my own country; it was amongst us in France, in the eighteenth century, that the principle of liberty of conscience resumed its course, which had been so long weakened and turned aside. The philosophy of that age, although an enemy to Christianity, borrowed from it the dogma of the liberty of souls, and upheld it with unfailing zeal—less, doubtless, from love of justice and truth, than for the purpose of undermining the reign of Jesus Christ. But whatever its object, it founded in minds the return of just toleration, and prepared for future ages the emancipation of so many Christian nations oppressed by the iron hand of despotism and heresy. Thus God draws good from evil, and nothing is produced

in the world, even against truth and justice, which will not, by divine transformation, sooner or later serve the cause of justice and truth. That French idea of liberty of conscience had passed to England and the United States of America; and O'Connell, who met it on his glorious way, easily made it serve to further his work.

Therefore, gentlemen, before insisting upon the gratitude which we owe to him, it is just that I should invite you to honor with sincere and unanimous applause all those who have aided that great work of Catholic emancipation. This is the first time that in a French assembly, at the foot of our altars, in the presence of God and men, we have occasion to pay a tribute of gratitude to those who have co-operated for the emancipation of our brethren in Ireland and England, to those diverse instruments, far or near, of that great act of the 13th of April, 1829, which so many hearts called for; which so many sovereign pontiffs, in the mysterious watchings of the Vatican, had ardently prayed for; and which will for ever remain in history as a memorial of one of the brightest hours which God has vouchsafed to the conscience of the human race. Join then with me, O my brethren, join with me from the depths of your hearts, and lifting our hands towards God, let us say together: Eternal praise, honor, glory, and gratitude to Sir Robert Peel and to His Grace the Duke of Wellington, who presented to the English parliament the bill for Catholic emancipation! Eternal praise, honor, glory, and gratitude to the House of Commons and the House of Lords of England, who accepted the bill for Catholic emancipation! Eternal praise, honor, glory, and gratitude to his Majesty King George IV., who signed and sanctioned the bill for Catholic emancipation? Eternal praise, honor, glory, and gratitude to those Protestants of England and Ireland, who, with the magnanimity of a truly patriotic and Christian spirit, favored the pre-

sentation, discussion, and adoption of the bill for Catholic emancipation! But also, and above all, eternal praise, honor, glory, and gratitude to the man who drew together in his powerful hand the scattered elements of justice and deliverance, and who, pressing them to the goal with vigorous patience which thirty years did not tire, caused at last to shine upon his country the unhopèd-for day of liberty of conscience, and thus merited not only the title of liberator of his country, but the œcumenical title of liberator of the Church!

For, had Ireland alone profited by emancipation, what man in the Church, since Constantine, has emancipated seven millions of souls at a single stroke? Consult your recollection; seek in history since the first and famous edict which granted liberty of conscience to Christians, and see whether there are many acts to be met with comparable by the extent of their effects to the act of emancipation? Here are seven millions of souls free to serve and love God to the end of time; and whenever this people, advancing in its life and liberty, shall throw back over the past an inquiring glance, it will find the name of O'Connell at the end of its bondage and the beginning of its renovation.

But the act of emancipation did not touch Ireland alone; it embraced in its plenitude the whole British empire, that is to say, besides Ireland, Scotland, and Great Britain, those islands, those peninsulas, and those continents to which England before extended with her domination the intolerance of her laws. Behold then a hundred millions of men, behold shores washed by twenty seas, and the seas themselves delivered from spiritual bondage. The ships of England sail henceforth under the flag of liberty of conscience, and the innumerable nations which they touch with their prow can no longer separate in their thought power, civilization, and the



liberty of the soul—those three things born of Christ and left as His terrestrial heritage to the nations which embrace the emancipating mystery of His cross. What consequences, gentlemen, from one single act! What a boundless horizon opened to the hopes of the Church! Need I say more that you may not regret the boldness with which I pronounced the name of O'Connell after the names of Moses, Cyrus, Judas Maccabæus, Constantine, Charlemagne, and Gregory VII.; all acting with the force of regular sovereignty, whilst O'Connell had but the force of a citizen and the sovereignty of genius?

And yet I have not said all. There is a peril to which modern society is exposed—and it is the greatest of all—I mean the alliance of spiritual servitude with civil liberty. Circumstances, which it would require too much time to demonstrate to you, impel the destinies of more than one nation upon that fatal incline; and England was there to encourage them by her example, possessing on the one hand liberal institutions, which she guards with supreme jealousy, and on the other overwhelming a portion of her subjects under the sceptre of an autocratic and intolerant fanaticism. O'Connell has undone that terrible teaching given by England to the European continent. Nations yet young in civil liberty will no longer see their elder brother urging them into the road of religious servitude by the spectacle of an adulterous contradiction. Henceforth all liberties are sisters; they will enter or depart at the same time and together, a family indeed inseparable and sacred, of which no member can die without the death of all.

In fine, consider this: the principle of liberty of conscience, upon which depends the future of truth in the world, was already supported in Europe by the power of opinion and by the power of Catholicity; for wherever opinion could speak, it demanded liberty of conscience,



and in most of the great Catholic states it is already established in fact and of right. Protestantism alone had not yet given its adhesion to that solemn treaty of souls ; notwithstanding its principle—in appearance liberal—it practised the native intolerance of heresy. Thanks to O'Connell, opinion, Catholicity, and Protestantism, that is to say, all the intellectual and religious forces of Europe, are agreed to base the work of the future upon the equitable transaction of liberty of conscience.

And when its results are produced in the world, when, not ourselves, but our descendants, shall see all religious errors vanquished by the peaceful spread of Christianity ; when Islamism, already dying, shall be finally extinguished ; when Brahminism and Buddhism, already warned, shall have accomplished their transitory cycle ; when in presence of each other nothing but the total affirmation of truth and the total nothingness of error shall remain, and the combat of minds shall thus touch the supreme moment of its consummation, then posterity will know O'Connell fully ; it will judge what was the mission and what the life of the man who was able to emancipate, in the sanctuary of conscience, all the kingdoms of England, her colonies, her fleets, her power ; and throughout the world, directly or indirectly, place them to the service of the cause of God, His Christ and His Church. It will judge whether he has not merited, in the Christian and universal sense, that title of Liberator which we give to him from this hour.

But he was a Liberator also in another manner, which it remains for me to show you.

Not alone is the Church persecuted here below, mankind is also persecuted. Mankind, like the Church, is turn by turn persecuted and delivered, and for the same reason. The Church is persecuted because she possesses rights and imposes duties ; mankind is persecuted because it has rights

and duties also in its domain. Justice weighs upon us no matter upon what head it dwell, and we seek to escape from it, not only to the detriment of God, but to the detriment of man. We deny the rights of man as we deny the rights of God; and it is a great error to believe that there is but one combat here below, and that were the Church to sacrifice her eternal interests, there would not remain other interests for which it would be necessary to draw the sword. No, gentlemen, let us not deceive ourselves, the rights of God and the rights of mankind are conjoined; the duties towards God and duties towards mankind were combined in the evangelical law as well as in the law of Sinai; all that is done for or against God is done for or against man; as God is persecuted we are persecuted also; as God is delivered we are alike delivered. The history of the world, as well as the history of the Church, has its persecutors and its liberators; I could name them to you; but time presses upon us; let us leave the past, and return to that dear and glorious O'Connell, to see him as a son of man after having seen him as a son of God.

He was fifty-four years old when Catholic emancipation was gained. Fifty-four, gentlemen, is a terrible age, not because it approaches old age, but because it possesses force enough to be ambitious with sufficient lassitude to be contented with the past and to dream of the repose of glory. There are few men who, having by thirty years of labor obtained a marked, and above all an august triumph, like that of Catholic emancipation, have the courage to begin a second career and expose their fame to the shock of fortune, when they might enjoy happy and honored repose in their old age. Others are attracted by the snare of vulgar ambition. We see these tribunes of the people, after having served the cause of justice and liberty in their early years, withdraw therefrom under some pretext of duty, persuading themselves that there are two

ways of serving it, and, deceived by inconstancy, cause the second part of their life to insult the first.

O'Connell, gentlemen, knew how to avoid each of these shoals; he remained young and unmindful of his years until the close of his life. I see young men in this auditory. O'Connell, gentlemen, was of your age until he disappeared from amongst us; he lived, he died in the sincerity of unchangeable youth. Hardly had he given himself time to see his triumph, hardly had he forced open the doors of parliament by a second election, before he quitted his seat, and, to the astonishment of all England, he hastened to Ireland. What goes he to seek there? He goes to tell his beloved Erin that it is not enough to have emancipated conscience, that God and man are inseparable, and that after having served the country of heaven, if something still remain to do for the country of earth, the first commandment alone is kept and not the second; and as the two form but one, not to have kept the second is not even to have kept the first. He declares to her that, although aged and covered with glory, it is his intention to recommence his life, and not to rest a single day until he has obtained equality of rights between England and Ireland. For such, in regard to human right, was the state of the two countries, that the one hardly appeared to be a satellite to the other. England had diminished the property, the commerce, the enterprise, all the rights of Ireland, in order to increase her own; and that odious policy placed Ireland in a state of inferiority which reached even to the impossibility of existence. Such is despotism, gentlemen; and we are all guilty of it in some degree; all of us, more or less, diminish the rights of others in order to increase our own, and the man who is exempt from that stubborn stain of our species may believe that he has attained the very highest point of the perfection of human nature.

O'Connell kept his word ; he did not cease for a single day to claim equality of rights between England and Ireland ; and in that second work he spent the seventeen last years of his life. He obtained from the government the introduction of several bills in the sense of equality of rights ; the parliament constantly rejected them. The Liberator was not discouraged ; he had the gratification of seeing the municipal corporations of Ireland, composed exclusively of Protestants, fall under his attacks ; and, the first Catholic for two centuries, he himself wore the insignia of Lord Mayor of Dublin.

Such constancy in claiming the human rights of his country, without ever abating his energy either from age or failure, would have sufficed, gentlemen, to mark the place of O'Connell amongst the liberators of mankind ; for whoever serves his country in the general sense of the rights of all is not a man of any particular time or place ; he speaks for nations present and to come, he gives them example and courage, he casts seed upon the world which the human race will harvest sooner or later. We shall still better judge the civil action of O'Connell if we examine the foundations upon which he placed it, and the doctrine which he has left to us on the subject of resistance to oppression.

"The claiming of rights" was for O'Connell the principle of force against tyranny. In fact, there is in right, as in all that is true, a real, an eternal, and an indestructible power, which can only disappear when right is no longer even named. Tyranny would be invincible, were it to succeed in destroying with its name the idea of right, in creating silence in the world in regard to right. It endeavors at least to approach that absolute term, and to lessen, by all the means of violence and corruption, the expression of justice. As long as a just soul remains with boldness of speech, despotism is restless, troubled,



fearing that eternity is conspiring against it. The rest is indifferent, or at least alarms it but little. Do you appeal to arms against it? It is but a battle. To a riot? It is but a matter of police. Violence is of time, right is heaven-born. What dignity, what force there is in the right which speaks with calmness, with candor, with sincerity, from the heart of a good man! Its nature is contagious; as soon as it is heard, the soul recognizes and embraces it; a moment sometimes suffices for a whole people to proclaim it and bend before it. It is said, no doubt, that the claiming of right is not always possible, and that there are times and places when oppression has become so inveterate that the language of right is as chimerical as its reality. It may be so; but this was not the position of O'Connell and of his country. O'Connell and Ireland could speak, write, petition, associate, elect magistrates and representatives. The rights of Ireland were despised, but not disarmed; and in this condition the doctrine of O'Connell was that of Christianity and reason. Liberty is a work of virtue, a holy work, and consequently an intellectual work.

But "rights must be claimed with perseverance." The emancipation of a people is not the work of a day; it infallibly encounters in the ideas, the passions, the interests and the ever-intricate interweaving of human things, a thousand obstacles accumulated by time and which time alone is able to remove, provided that its course be aided by a parallel and an uninterrupted action. We must not, said O'Connell, simply speak to-day and to-morrow; write, petition, assemble to-day and to-morrow; we must continue to speak, write, petition, assemble, until the object is attained and right is satisfied. We must exhaust the patience of injustice and force the hand of Providence. You hear, gentlemen; this is not the school of desires vain and without virtue, it is the school of souls tempered



for good, who know its price and do not wonder that it is great. O'Connell, indeed, has given to his lessons the sanction of his example; what he said, he did, and no life has ever been, even to its last moment, more indefatigably and better filled than his own. He labored before the future with the certainty which inspires the present; he was never surprised or discontented at not obtaining his end; he knew that he should not attain it during his life—he doubted it at least—and by the ardor of his actions it might have been supposed that he had but another step and another day before him. Who will count the number of assemblies in which he spoke and over which he presided, the petitions dictated by him, his journeys, his plans, his popular triumphs, and that inexpressible arsenal of ideas and facts which compose the fabulous tissue of his seventy-two years? He was the Hercules of liberty!

To perseverance in claiming rights he joined a condition which always appeared to him to be of sovereign importance, it was that of being an "irreproachable organ of this work;" and, to explain this maxim by his conduct, we see from the first that, as he understood it, every servant of liberty must claim it equally and efficaciously for all, not only for his party, but for the adverse party; not only for his religion, but for all; not only for his country, but for the whole world. Mankind is one, and its rights are everywhere the same, even when the exercise of them differs according to the state of morals and minds. Whoever excepts a single man in his claim for right, whoever consents to the servitude of a single man, black or white, were it even but for a hair of his head unjustly bound, he is not a sincere man, and he does not merit to combat for the sacred cause of the human race. The public conscience will always reject the man who demands exclusive liberty, or even who is indifferent

about the rights of others; for exclusive liberty is but a privilege, and the liberty which is indifferent about others is but a treason. We remark a nation, having arrived at a certain development of its social institutions, stopping short or even retrograding. Do not ask the reason. You may be sure that in the heart of that people there has been some secret sacrifice of right, and that the seeming defenders of its liberty, incapable of desiring liberty for others than themselves, have lost the *prestige* which conquers and saves, preserves and extends it. Degenerate sons of holy combats, their enervated language rolls in a vicious circle; to listen is already to have replied to them.

It was never thus with O'Connell; never, during fifty years, did his language once lose the invincible charm of sincerity. It vibrated for the rights of his enemy as for his own. It was heard denouncing oppression from where-soever it came and upon whatsoever head it fell; thus he attracted to his cause, to the cause of Ireland, souls separated from his own by the abyss of the most profound disagreements; fraternal hands sought his own from the most distant parts of the world. It is because there is in the heart of the upright man who speaks for all, and who, in speaking for all, seems even sometimes to speak against himself: because there is there, an omnipotence of logical and moral superiority which almost infallibly produces reciprocity.

Yes, Catholics, understand well, if you desire liberty for yourselves, you must desire it for all men and under all the heavens. If you demand it but for yourselves it will never be granted to you; give it where you are masters that it may be given to you where you are slaves.

O'Connell also understood in another sense that maxim, that "it is necessary to be irreproachable in claiming rights." He desired that authority, and law, which is

the highest expression of it, should be sincerely and religiously respected. For authority is also liberty, and whoever, willing to defend the one, attacks the other, knows neither what he says nor what he does. Authority is an integral part of liberty, as duty enters into right by a manifest correlation, since the right of one man necessarily entails the duty of another. This is why civil charters, as well as the great evangelic charter, consecrate at the same time right and duty, liberty and authority. Every hand which separates them destroys them, and no people which does not venerate them by the same title will ever be capable of becoming a free people. O'Connell pushed respect for the law even to superstition; he permitted all to himself up to the limit where he encountered a law evidently in vigor. And yet no man has ever made, under even persecuting laws, a more marvelous use of the space which they left open to him. A profound knowledge of law admirably served the magic of his movements, and he had the honor of dying, after forty-seven years of civil struggles, without having incurred a single definite judicial condemnation. Once, on the occasion of that famous meeting at Clontarf, he feared that he had been caught in a snare by which he would not have left the baptismal robe of his popular and Christian tribunate without a stain. On the eve of the meeting, at four o'clock, at the moment when Dublin and Ireland was full of British troops, the viceroy published a proclamation interdicting the assembly. O'Connell was terrified by the thought of an inevitable collision between the people and the army. Pale and agitated, during the whole night he despatched proclamations and messengers; and at last, at daybreak, after a night of terrible anxiety, he had the happiness of knowing that not a soul was to be found on the field of Clontarf where five hundred thousand had been expected.

This was the occasion of his last triumph. You know how England once desired to make him expiate that long agitation in which he had kept a large portion of the empire ; how he was cited, condemned, imprisoned ; and, in fine, the sentence was brought before the House of Lords of England by the appeal of the man who should have numbered among them so many enemies. A memorable period, when all Ireland went to visit in his prison the captive Liberator, when the assembled bishops offered up a prayer to God that the man of Erin might be comforted in tribulation and come out of it victoriously ! That prayer of a whole people was granted, and after a magnanimous decision, which declared that O'Connell had not offended, Ireland had once more the pride and consolation of welcoming her aged father in all the glory which she had prepared for him, and which seemed to be incapable either of increase or end.

According to human ideas, O'Connell should have died on that day. But the Arbitrator of destinies and the Judge of hearts had ordained it otherwise. O'Connell was a Christian ; faith and love of God had been the vivifying principles of his whole existence ; nevertheless, however truly faithful he might have been, it was possible for him not to have been insensible to the magnificent course of his life. Glory is a subtle poison which penetrates the bucklers of the stoutest hearts ; O'Connell merited that God should purify him severely and place upon his head, after so many crowns which had never faded there, that supreme crown of adversity without which no glory is perfect either on earth or in heaven.

O'Connell saw many of his own party withdraw from him ; his soul was wounded in pride and in friendship ; it was also wounded in the people whom he had so tenderly and so effectually served. A horrible famine swept down the children of Erin before his eyes ; he saw evils



against which the eloquence of his genius could do nothing, and felt to the very core the powerlessness of glory. But, whilst he was a prey to this cruel agony, suddenly, on the sacred banks of the Tiber, a voice was heard which thrilled through the world and Christendom. The one and the other awaited a father who should feel the wants of modern times, who would take them into his pontifical and pacific hands, and raise them from the earth to the very height of religion. This expectation and these desires were satisfied ; O'Connell could die, Pius IX. was in the world ; O'Connell could be silent, Pius IX. spoke ; O'Connell could descend into the tomb, Pius IX. was seated in the chair of St. Peter. The aged and dying champion of the Church and mankind was not deceived ; the force and the weakness of his life were revealed to him ; he knew that he had been but the precursor of a greater liberator than himself, and, like John the Baptist, went into the desert to see the envoy for whom he waited, and the latchet of whose shoes he did not think himself worthy to unloose. O'Connell turned his eyes towards Rome ; and, making a last effort against age and affliction, he left home in the simplicity and joy of a pilgrim. But it was too late ; strength failed him on the shores of the Mediterranean, when he already perceived the cupolas and the horizon of Rome. All Rome expected him and prepared triumphal arches for him. His heart alone reached the city, where Pius IX. received it. The pontiff, placing his hands upon the son of O'Connell, said these words to him : " Since I am deprived of the happiness, so long desired, of embracing the hero of Christendom, let me at least have the consolation of embracing his son ! " Let us not seek elsewhere, gentlemen, the tomb of O'Connell ; it is not in Ireland, how worthy soever she might be to possess it for ever ; the tomb of O'Connell is in the arms and in the soul of Pius IX. We must look there to address to



the Liberator the supreme word, the word and the prayer of adieu.

Let us meditate a moment.

Gentlemen, the interests of the Church are those of mankind, and the interests of mankind are those of the Church. Christianity, of which the Church is the living body, has attained so high a degree of power only in consequence of the profound fusion which exists between it and mankind. Now, modern society is the expression of the wants of mankind, and consequently it is also the expression of the wants of the Church, and these few words give you the intimate signification of the life of O'Connell. O'Connell was, in our age of divisions, the first mediator between the Church and modern society; which is to say that he was, in the same age, the first mediator between the Church and mankind. We must follow him, gentlemen, if we would serve God and men. Doubtless, it is the world which has separated from us, which has willed to live and govern itself without us; but what matters it whence the evil comes, or whose was the pride which caused the separation? We feel now the need that we have of each other; let us go to meet the world, which seeks us and waits for us. That admiration which it sheds upon the memory of O'Connell, those cries of love which it raises round Pius IX., manifest a desire which it brings before the face of heaven, and a proof that it is not insensible towards those who comprehend its evils and its wants. Comprehend them, gentlemen; let us follow even from afar, but with faith, upon the glorious footsteps which we have just surveyed; and if already you feel this desire, if the vain shadows of the past lessen in your mind, if your strength grow greater, and with it a presentiment that you will not be useless in the cause of the Church and mankind, ah! do not seek the reason; say to yourselves that God has for once spoken to you by the soul of O'Connell.





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